

THE
VERITY
OF
Christian Faith.

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Ferrara.



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LONDON,
Printed by R. Daniel, 1651.

1696:17

The Contents.

CHAP. I.

Page.

That there is a true Religion. 1

II. There are two sorts of Divine Worship. 5

III. That there is no better life then that of Christians. 9

IIII. There cannot be imagined the last end of any life better then that of Christians. 13

V. There can be no better means to attain unto eternall blisse, then a Christian life. 22

VI. By Christian Religion man most assuredly obtains eternal blisse. 28


VII. The truth of Christian Faith is proved, by being the cause of a virtuous life. 32

VIII. That Christian Doctrine containing the Grounds of Faith, is from God. 44


IX. Christian Faith proved true out
a 2 of

The Contents.

CHAP.	Page
<i>of their use of Prayer and Contemplation.</i>	58
X. <i>The same Verity proved out of the exterior Worship of Christians.</i>	67
XI. <i>The same Verity proved out of the intrinsecall effects of Christian life.</i>	77
XII. <i>The same truth proved out of the extrinsecal effects of Christian life.</i>	90
XIII. <i>The same confirmed by the wonderfull works of Christ, and first by his Power.</i>	101
XIIII. <i>The same concluded out of the Wisdome of Christ.</i>	125
XV. <i>The same Verity confirmed out of the Goodnesse of Christ,</i>	144
XVI. <i>The same proved out of the Power, Wisdome and Goodnesse of Christ all together.</i>	161



The Preface.

AVING as farre forth as
I judged sufficient for
my present purpose treat-
ed in the precedent
Book those things, which are of
themselves obvious to naturall rea-
son, it remains now that I discusse
those also which are above the sphere
of our Nature, that I may thereby
plainly shew the Christian Faith to
be most true not onely by natural mo-
tives, but out of the very actions of
our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus;
and because things before our eyes do
more enforce our understanding to
assent, then things which are past;
for it is harder to deny what we
plainly see before our eyes, then that
which we receive at trust by Tradi-

The Preface.

tions. I shall lay the first grounds of my proofs in those things which are unquestionable unto all, as being daily seen practised in the Church of Christ, and are most apparant to sense it self. I do not speak of the vices of evill Christians, who as such are sequestred rather, and cut off from the communication and mysticall Union of the Church, but of those good members of it, which not onely bear and professe the name of Christians, but also prove themselves to be such by their virtuous lives and actions. This done, I shall produce reasons groundded in those actions of Christ which are most generally received and allowed of by all, so that the latter shall manifestly confirm the former; the things present, those which are past. But because the chief effect at which the institution of the Church aims, is Justice, and an irreprehensible and unspotted life: our
Saviour

The Preface.

Saviour saying (speaking of the members of his Church) Ego veni ut vitam habeant & abundantius habeant : To this end I came that they may live, and that they live more abundantly. First therefore I shall in due order prove the truth of the Christian Faith, by reasons truly grounded in the virtuous lives of good Christians. Secondly, in the causes of such a life : and lastly in the effects of the same life, wherein I shall comprise all those things which are daily exercised in the Church Militant of Christ.



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*The triumph of the Crosse, or,
of the verity of Faith.*

CHAP. I.

That there is a true Religion.

IT is altogether necessary that every one acknowledge, that in the world there is a true Religion : By Religion we understand a due Worship exhibited unto Almighty God, as he is the universall fountain, source, and moderatour of all things : For every effect doth exhibite a certain worship to its cause whilst converting its self unto it, and as it were invoking it with a kind of subjection,

A 4

2 *The triumph of the Crosse, or,*

ction, it strives to imitate and make it self like unto it, which expresses nothing else but a certain return of honour from the effect to its cause, that it may be more and more perfected by it. Wherefore Almighty God being the universall Cause of all things, of whom heaven and earth and all that hath goodnesse in it, have their whole being and dependance: most clear it is that in man there ought to be an ingrafted and naturall instinct to convert it self to God, and to invoke and subject himself unto him, to do his uttermost to become like unto him, and to be perfected by him, which is nothing else then to exhibite worship unto him. Now if there be such a naturall inclination in the rationall nature of man to worship his Creatour, and that this inclination cannot be superfluous, or in vain, we must of force conclude, that there

there is a true Religion to be found amongst men.

Moreover, seeing that man is naturally inclined to the divine Worship, (as every effect is to its cause) and that he is rationally, as not being necessitated to any thing, as other brute and irrational things are, which are naturally carried away by their appetites; but having a true dominion over his actions, he freely disposes of them as he list. Now if all men (as naturall reason is oftentimes very defective) should fall into so generall and gross an error, that there should be no true and divine Worship found amongst them, it would follow that they would be so deprived of the divine Providence, that there would appear no Divine care exercised towards them in the thing which is of all others most necessary and naturall unto them; seeing that this true divine Worship is that, by

4. *The triumph of the Crosse*, or,
which man is to arrive to the fruiti-
on of his last end. But this I have
elsewhere plainly refuted.

I adde that every countrey and
nation, in every age both past and
present, having been (though in di-
vers wayes) addicted unto the di-
vine Worship, it must necessarily
follow that this truth is wholly in-
grafted and naturall unto man; for
that is naturall (as I have elsewhere
shoven) which agrees unto all, and
at all times, wherefore if there
should be no true divine Worship
found, this natural inclination would
be wholly frustrate, seeing it were not
able to arrive unto the end which it
was ordained for: whence it would
follow that Almighty God executed
his Providence more towards unrea-
sonable creatures then towards man.

Lastly, seeing that every cause in-
fuses its perfection and goodnesse, as
much as possible it may, into its ef-
fect,

fect, intending by all means to attract it, and make it as farre as it hath capacity like unto it self; Almighty God being superlatively good, and the first origin of all things, hath questionlesse a speciall care of the perfection of man, for whose sake and use, he made all other inferiour creatures: wherefore, the true perfection of man principally consisting in the subjecting himself unto God, and in the Divine veneration in the which Religion doth chiefly consist, it follows that there is a true Religion to be found in the world.

CHAP. II.

*There are two sorts of Divine
Worship.*

MAN having a capacity to exhibit veneration unto Almighty God

6 *The triumph of the Crosse, or,*

God two wayes, corporally and spirituallly, we ought to distinguish two sorts of Divine Worship in him, to wit, interiour and exteriour: interiour is that which we perform by the acts of our understanding and will: exteriour is that which we exhibite by a personall reverence, externall ceremonies, and corporall sacrifices. Now as all matters are naturally made and ordained for their forms, so questionlesse the externall Worship hath a due subordination to the interiour.

This interiour Divine Worship is nothing else but a righteousness and perfection of the interiour man, by the which God is most honoured, which I prove in this manner. Every cause receives most honour from the perfection of its more principall effects, whence artizans become famous by the excellence of their master-pieces; but there is no visible effect more
noble

noble then man, who, the more excellent he becomes in perfection, the more is the Divine Honour increased. Now he is so much the more perfect, by how much his life is more holy, for sanctity is the perfection of the interiour man, by which even the whole man is perfected ; and therefore the chief honour that man does Almighty God, is by a virtuous, holy, and perfect life, and in this manner, the true and entire worship of Almighty God is the life of an upright and virtuous man becoming so by his actions, as they have a reference unto his Creatour.

We do not worship Almighty God meerly and precisely for himself, but also that we may obtain from him that supreme blisse for which man is created ; wherefore, the true Religion is the means and disposition for the gaining of this supreme felicity of man, as we see naturall

8 *The triumph of the Crosse, or,*
turall causes exact the congruous
dispositions of that subject or matter
into which they produce their ef-
fects, seeing therefore it is manifest
that man is much more perfectly
disposed for the obtaining his chief
blisse by a virtuous life, then by
sacrifices and exteriour Ceremonies;
it is no lesse certain that the true Re-
ligion consists in the rightcousnesse
of life.

Moreover, Almighty God not
being a body but a pure act, man
becomes more like him by the purity
of his interiour part, then by any
exteriour integrity, and therefore
God is more perfectly worshipped
by the spirit, then by any functions
of the body; for Almighty God
being a Spirit, it behoves those that
worship him, to adore him in spirit
and verity.

CHAP. III.

*That there is no better life then that
of Christians.*

THere is no life more perfect
and holy then the life of Chri-
stians, for if we take a view of all
living creatures, we shall find in the
lowest degree of life those which one-
ly enjoy vegetation or growth, as
plants, thence we raise us unto the
animall or sensitive life, which de-
gree of life admits a latitude of di-
vers degrees of sensitive perfection,
whereof that degree is more perfect
which enjoyes the perfect degree of
sensations. Now the intellectu-
all life farre exceeding that which
is onely vegetive and sensible, we
easily conclude that the life of
beasts is farre inferiour to the life
of man, in which also we distinguish
divers

10 *The triumph of the Crosse*, or,
divers degrees of actuall perfecti-
on, though not of essentiall, for we
preferre those that follow the light
and *dictamen* of reason, before those
who swerving from it and neglect-
ing reason, give the full scope and
reins to sense. The reason is clear,
because the more they neglect rea-
son, and addict themselves to sensu-
all pleasure, the lesse they participate
the life of man, and become more
like unto beasts; but those who are
guided by reason and do suppress
the brute and inferiour part, do lead
the life of man and not of beasts;
there being therefore in man a com-
bination of these two degrees of the
rationall and brute life, and the ra-
tionall being farre more excellent of
the two, it must needs follow that
that man is more perfect who ad-
dicts himself to a rationall life, then
he who gives himself over to the life
of brutes, now amongst those who
addict

addict themselves unto an intellectuall life, there is a great difference; for the soul of man becomes much more perfect by the knowledge and love of the truth of spirituall things then of corporall, especially as they are exercised about the divine Perfections: hence it is that the life and powers of the soul of man become more perfect, the more it refrains from corporall objects, and imployes it self in the contemplation and love of spirituall things, especially of the divine Perfections. Now a Christian life aims chiefly at this, that neglecting all created objects whether spirituall or corporall, it wholly imployes it self in the contemplation and love of Almighty God, so that it becomes in a manner by an intellectuall and affectionate union one and the Spirit with its divine Object; wherefore, it being a thing impossible to find a life more perfect then

12 *The triumph of the Crosse*, or,
then that by which a man is united
with his first cause, and his last end,
it appears clearly that there can be
no life more perfect then that of a
Christian.

Moreover, the righteous life of
man, as he is man (as I have said
before) receives its value from the
degree of reason which it exercises;
wherefore, the more rationall it is,
the greater is its worth and value:
Therefore, seeing that those which
are true Christians are unwilling to
do any thing at all against reason, it
must needs follow that their life farre
excells the life of other Sects and
Religions.

The virtuous life of man hath a
chief regard unto that for which it
was created, to wit, the contempla-
tion of the said perfections, for
which is required a most pure seren-
ity of mind; for if a mind be sub-
ject to humane and sensuall passions,
it

it will be altogether unfit for so sublime and elevated an object ; But there is no life to be found which more undresses the interiour powers of the soul of man, then that of Christians, which spends its whole endeavours in uniting it self onely with its Creatour : Therefore, there is none which surpasses it in true dignity and excellency.

CHAP. IV.

There cannot be imagined the last end of any life better then that of Christians.

TO the end I may make it appear that there is no life to be compared with that of Christians, we must know that there are two changes principally required to a virtuous life, to wit, a perfect end, and proportionable means for attaining

14 *The triumph of the Crosse, or,*
taining to that end. First, I will
shew that there is no end of the life
of man, so consonant to reason, as
that which Christians aim at; next
I shall make appear that the means
which Christians are to put in exe-
cution for the gaining their end, are
the most accomplished and excellent
of all others.

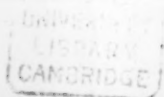
And as for the end, it will easily
appear, if we daily consider that
there are two sorts of ends of the
life of man; the end *cujus*, or, of
which, and the end *quo*, or, by
which: that is the thing it self which
we seek, and the means by which
we enjoy the same. Nothing que-
stionlesse is so excellent as Almighty
God; But God is the end of the life
of Christians, for whole sake, and
unto whom they addresse all their
actions: This end therefore of theirs
admits no colour of question. Their
faith also aspires unto the clear vision
and

and fruition of Almighty God, not by the mediation of creatures, but immediately by his divine Essence. Now man by his clear intuition and fruition becoming united unto Almighty God, arrives by the same unto his most consummate and supreme perfection, beyond which there remains not the least object of any rationall desire; Almighty God being that goodnesse which plenarily satiates all the appetites of the soul of man.

It remains now that I shew by most pregnant and convincing reasons, that the last blisse and felicity of man consists in the clear intuition of the Divine perfections, for I have now proved that it cannot be attained unto in this life; and if we place it in the contemplation of Almighty God, this not being had here, it is to be expected in the next life, where if it shall consist in the intel-

16 *The triumph of the Crosse*, or,
intellectuall possessing of the first
verity not known by its own proper
species or immediate objective in-
fluence, but by the intervention of
effects or other representatives, there
will arise many difficulties; for first
it will not appear how mans intelle-
ctuall appetite will be fully satiated
and wholly acquiesce in such a me-
diate contemplation, for if the soul
of man in the state of separation
from the body hath knowledge not
onely of materiall objects, but of
spirituall also, and immateriall sub-
stances; either it hath this know-
ledge perfectly or imperfectly; if im-
perfectly? by their intervention man
cannot arrive unto the perfect know-
ledge of God, and all things in the
state of imperfection have a capa-
city and appetite of their respective
perfection (so the matter seeks its
form, and that which is foul to be-
come beautifull) certainly the soul
of

of man as unsatisfied by such an imperfect knowledge of its object, cannot be at quiet, which also may be seen in the endeavours of men, whose understanding not content with a confused and perfect knowledge of things, strives by all labour and industry to arrive unto the perfect knowledge of them. If with a perfect knowledge they penetrate the effects, they are presently inflamed with a desire to know their causes, for man naturally desires true knowledge which consists in the knowing the causes of things. That which is naturall cannot be taken from nature, and as naturall motion grows more impetuous and swift in the end, then it was in its beginning; so mans understanding, the more perfectly it hath penetrated the effects, the more earnestly doth it seek to know the causes of them; therefore, I do not see how the natural appetite



18 *The triumph of the Crosse*, or,
appetite of mans understanding may
be satisfied without the clear sight of
Almighty God, which also is con-
firmed by experience, that the ca-
pacity of mans mind is not satisfied
by any limited object, beyond
which it alwayes apprehends some-
what to remain unknown, whence
it is that if any limited dimension
or number be presupposed, there re-
mains alwayes a faculty of our un-
derstanding to add somewhat further
and further without end, and this is
the nature of that infinity which
the Mathematicians in their lines and
numbers call the infinity of encrease
or augment. Therefore all created
substances being finite and limited,
our understanding never rests satiated
untill it behold the increated sub-
stance of Almighty God, which
alone as being a pure act admits no
bounds or circumscription. It is
therefore unreasonable to prefix any
other

other end of the life of man, then that which our faith hath established (to wit) the clear vision of the divine Essence. For it is manifest to all, that Almighty God is the last object in which the soul of man doth finally acquiesce. All naturall motion tends to some last end or centre whither being arrived, it ceases. Now there being no created substance in which the heart of man can fix its finall affection, we may conclude, that it onely rests then when he shall behold face to face Almighty God, then whom there being nothing greater, there can be nothing wanting in him to the full satiety of man; nor shall he further affect inferior objects, because he shall make no account of them. For there is no proportion between things limited and that which is infinite; as also because there is no perfection in any effect, which is not more perfectly

B

fectly and eminently contained in the first cause, and consequently there will be no further desire of any thing, because our understanding will be most compleatly perfected, as fully possessing its supreme and last object, in the which it will most easily behold those other inferiour things, towards which it is naturally inclined; and this is one difference between the understanding and senses, for the senses in the fruition of their principall object are exhausted and corrupted; but the understanding is thereby exceedingly perfected.

But here we must observe, Almighty God being infinite, and above the sphere of all created substances, that our understanding by its own proper forces, virtue, and energy cannot raise it self so high as to behold the divine Essence; but there is necessary a supernaturall disposition or quality called by Divines,
the

the light of glory, which God infuses in the next life into the souls which are free from all guilt of sinne or pain, that he may thereby make them capable and fit for this beatificall vision. For Almighty God alwayes supplies necessities, nor can there be any thing elevated above its own proper sphere, unlesse it be assisted by some superiour virtue; now the vigour alone of the most intense naturall light of our understanding, is no way sufficient to produce the clear vision of Almighty God, because the excellence of the object precisely does not elevate naturall power to an act of another kind, or of a superiour nature, such as is the beatificall vision in regard of a created understanding, which therefore ought to be supplied with some supernaturall disposition or quality, which we call the light of Glory. Whence it appears, what a true and

rationall judgement our Faith frames of the end of humane life, and how easily it dissolves the difficulties of controversie, in the which those of other opinions find themselves wholly intangled, as in so many Labyrinths. Where whatsoever we say either of the end *cujus*, or the end *quo*, there can be found none so good and rationall, no nor even imagined, as that which Christians profess and teach.

C H A P. V.

There can be no better means to attain unto eternall blisse, then a Christian life.

BEing now to treat of the means by which we are to arrive to the fore-mentioned ends, I shall make it appear that there is none which may rationally be compared with those, which are approved by the Christian

Christian Faith; for Almighty God doing nothing in vain, I suppose that no man can doubt, but man is to arrive unto his last end, which is eternall beatitude, by some means or other; for that thing questionlesse would be altogether vain and to no purpose which could not arrive unto the end for which it was ordained, as for example, the power of motion in man would be in vain, had he no limbs, muscles, and joynts to perform it, seeing therefore that man naturally thirsts after eternall blisse, if the means of attaining it should be taken away, certainly his desire of it would be altogether frustrate: Therefore there must be some means found, by which man is to arrive to this clear vision of God, which is his end. This means Christians call the purity of heart, and the divine Grace supernaturally infused into our souls, which makes them perfect,

fect, and enables them to operate and profit in all sorts of virtues.

No man can deny but that the purity of heart is the means to raise our selves to the contemplation of the first Verity. I call the means that, which bears a proportion with the gaining the ends, and to the clear knowledge of God, there is exacted a great rapt or extasie, he being the most supreme object of our understanding, and elevated farre above all things which are per-vious to the senses. Wherefore there is necessary a most exquisite purity of mind, that is a sovereign elevation of the soul from the love and affection of visible and corporall things to the intense love of invisible and spirituall objects; for that we call pure, which hath no mixture in it of any thing which is of an inferior nature and quality: Now our understanding being separated
from

from all corporall organs, and our soul being a spirituall and rationall substance, the more it abstracts and raises it self from corporall and materiall things, and unites it self with Divine objects, the more pure it becomes. Whatever Philosophers may have established and taught of the purity of heart, of virtues, and of morall integrity is not onely practised and taught by the Christian Religion, but by the same Religion there are found out new wayes and documents for the purifying our hearts with greater sanctity. For that purity of heart, which is found out and gained by the force of nature, is a mean no way proportionable with the end which we have prefixed for Christians; for whatever exceeds the forces of any nature cannot be gained without the assistance of another superiour nature, even as water or any ponderous bo-

dy is not raised of it self, but by the motion of another ; but to see the divine Substance (as I have said in the precedent Chapter) is above the sphere of a created nature , and therefore every intellectuall nature operating according to its capacity, it must needs follow, that a created understanding cannot purifie and undregge it self sufficiently , unlesse it be elevated by a superiour assistance, and therefore the morall integrity and righteousness of which Philosophers have treated, bears not a sufficient proportion with the last end and supreme blisse of man. Hence it is that Christians with great reason do attribute this proportion to Grace, and othet virtues supernaturally infused by Almighty God, who is wanting to none in the requisits necessary for the directing them, how with a most pure intention they may arrive unto their wished

wished end. To prove which more at large is not for my present intended brevity, having manifestly demonstrated in my Treatise *Of the simplicity of a Christian life*, that it is not derived from a naturall love or imagination, or from the light of naturall reason alone, or from any celestiall influence, or from any other spirituall creature, but from the graces and supernaturall gifts which Almighty God infuses into our souls. Wherefore, not to repeat the same thing oftentimes, those that are willing may read that Treatise, and see how Christian life is a most perfect mean for the gaining the end of mans life, whence it must needs follow that there is no other life so good and absolutely perfect as that of Christians.

CHAP. VI.

By Christian Religion, man most assuredly obtains eternall blisse.

IF it be necessary (as I have proved it is) that amongst men there be some true Religion, which consists in the righteounesse of life, the Christian Religion excelling others in this, must of force be the true Religion, by the which Almighty God is both exteriorly and interiorly most duily worshipped. For the exterior doth either practise, or is an expression of the interior; so that if the interior be true, it is manifest that the exterior is either a practi-
call execution or expression of the same verity, whilst corresponding to the interior, it is rightly termed a true exterior worship, of which I shall hereafter treat more at large. We therefore worshipping Almighty
ty

ty God chiefly to exhibite a true honour unto him, and next for the obtaining our own true beatitude, it must follow that God is truly worshipped by Christians, and that Christians by so doing aim at their own blisse, which finally they are capable on; and consequently those which do persevere unto the end in a true virtuous and Christian life, may safely promise unto themselves eternall blisse. Moreover, having plainly heretofore demonstrated a divine Providence over humane affairs, to which Providence it appertains to direct things to their proper ends by proportionable means, and there are no means which bear greater proportion with eternall blisse then those of a Christian life; we may not doubt but whoever shall have led a Christian life, (the Worship of Christian Religion being the most perfect) shall be finally

nally elevated to that eternall blisse.

Further, if it be blasphemy to impeach the divine Goodnesse of Injustice, Christians who observe this law cannot be frustrate of their blisse; for Almighty God being the authour or the first mover of all things to their proper ends, either he will promote some mortals to their beatitude, or none; if none, mans creation would be vain, and (as I have heretofore made appear) many absurdities would follow: if some, then will he most justly preferre Christians whom we know to be the most virtuous of all men.

For if Christians shining before others in Piety and Religion become destitute of their finall blisse, no man certainly must look for it, because if that which appears greater have no being at all, what may be expected of that which appears lesse?

As

As for Christians, certainly they appear to have a greater proportion with their blisse then others, because (as I have proved) they have lesser impediments, and are more disposed unto it ; and therefore is the Christian Faith and Religion to be preferred before all others. And truly, if Christians living according to the prescript of their Religion become frustrate of their expected blisse, we must conclude that there is no such thing, but a meer fable, a fiction, a chymera ; for in naturall causes we see that they produce their severall forms and effects, if they be not hindred, and the matter subjected have in it congruous dispositions, and shall the end and last form of a virtuous life, which is eternall blisse, to which no life is better disposed then that of Christianity, be denied, to that which is most habill and disposed ? Which if it be so, then truly there

there is no finall felicity of man, because (as I have shown) there is no other form of finall blisse, and consequently there is no last end of the life of man. Since therefore it would follow (the end being the measure, or rule of the means by which the end is gained) that man would be the most miserable of all living creatures, and void of all order, would be subject to all casualty, and destitute of all providence, which is the greatest of all absurdities, I conclude therefore (that which I intended) that a Christian life by true Religion, is a most safe and certain way to eternall blisse.

C H A P. VII.

The truth of Christian Faith is proved by being the cause of a virtuous life.

HAVING proved the Verity of Christian Religion by Arguments

ments grounded in the virtuous life of Christians, now I intend to confirm the same out of the causes of the same life. The principall causes of this life is the Faith of our Saviour Christ Jesus crucified, informed with Charity, that is, which works by love : the Scripture teaching us, *Iustitia Dei per fidem Jesu Christi in omnes & super omnes qui credunt in eum* : that is, The Justice of God is by the Faith of Jesus Christ for all and over all which believe in him : and without Faith it is impossible to please God. This Faith of Christ informed, is that by which we beleeve that Christ crucified is true God, and true man, the Son of God identified in nature with the Father and the holy Ghost, but distinguished in person, whom we love above all things. Faith therefore altogether with the love of Christ is the cause of the forementioned life.

That

That it is so, daily experience teaches us, for that which is manifest cannot be denied, and of this we have a most palpable experience, because we see Christians make so much progresse in the righteousness of life, as they profit in the Faith of Christ; and on the contrary: for between these two sorts is such a strict connexion, as they inferre a mutuall consequence; and on the contrary, the defect of one inferres the losse of the other; for no sooner grows a Christian vicious of life, but the form of his Faith, which is Charity towards God, vanishes, and on the contrary. If therefore we perceive in the life of man such an effect, which men have learned by their own and others experience to have constantly endured from the coming of our Saviour even unto these present times, and that all Christians do averre and teach the same,
why

why should we not out of admiration of so important a matter play the Philosophers, enquiring and searching into the causes of it, even as the Philosophers having perceived the effects of naturall things, and being ignorant of their causes began first to admire, and then by discourse to search into the causes of them?

First, therefore there is no effect perfecter then its principall, or totall cause, of whom its perfection hath its dependance; if therefore the righteousness and verity of a Christian life, which of all sorts of life is the most excellent, hath its dependance of the Faith of Christ, it is not possible, but that Faith must be true; but if it be true, it follows that Christ is true God, and that his Religion is true, which the Christians profess.

It is no lesse impossible that that
which

which is good , and true , hath its substantial dependance of that which is evill and false ; for evill , as it is evill false, as it is false, is a certain nothing or a negation of the positive perfections of goodnesse and verity; now if the Faith of Christ should be false, and the love of him vitious, certainly the perfection of a Christian life which is known to be so good, could not substantially depend on that Faith and love which are evill, as it is clear.

Further , if the Faith of Christ were false , it would be the greatest of all errors ; for to affirm a man crucified to be true God, if it were not true, were an extreme madnesse and folly ; how could the life of Christians therefore, it being most perfect, (as I have proved) proceed from so great an error ? Seeing that the institution of a well-ordered life is derived from, and grounded in

in the framing a right conceit and understanding of it; and all errour in affection and morall actions proceed from its injustice, and difformity with the rule of equity.

Moreover, the better any nature or subject is disposed, the more is it facilitated for the receiving a more perfect form; but the form and perfection of our understanding is verity, and the disposition for the receiving of verity is a purity and sincerity of heart, and therefore the more a man hath his mind undrossed from the affection of creatures, the more it is prepared for the embracing verity, and rejecting that which is false; but I have proved, that there is no disposition more undrossed and purified, then that of a Christian life; and therefore if the Christian Faith were erroneous, none would more easily discern the deceit, then Christians. But we behold the clean
contrary:

contrary : for as they daily arrive to a more elevated degree of sanctity, the more constantly and undoubtedly they assever its integrity ; and as they grow more grounded in their Faith, their lives also increase in perfection, whence it undoubtedly follows, that their Faith is true.

Almighty God, as he is the first mover, and first cause of all things, doth no lesse produce and cause motions in spirituall things, then he doth in materiall and corporall, and consequently causes motions in our understanding and will ; and no man must doubt, but he affords the light of verity at least of things necessary to the salvation of reasonable creatures more clearly to them who by their concurrence and sanctimony of life become better disposed for it. Now if virtuous and sincere Christians were erroneous in their Faith, they should have no prerogative before

fore the vicious and sinfull, but as misled and blinded with many enormous deceits and errors would be given over to a reprobate sense, which is quite contrary to the goodness and present Providence of Almighty God.

The end is the cause of the means which are ordained for the gaining it; wherefore, those that erre in the end must needs go astray in the election of the means to attain it: for if the end in practicall things is as the principle and cause in things which are speculative, seeing therefore that Christians do not erre in the means which serve for the gaining the end, (to wit) in the virtue of their lives, but do farre excell all others, it follows they erre not in the end: But all assuredly confesse Christ to be their end; for they onely strive to become most like unto him, and with all their endeavours
aim

aim to enjoy him; therefore we must conclude that which they most constantly professe, that Christ crucified is true God.

The proceedings of Almighty God are alwayes ordinate, ordering things by his divine Wildome, so as that he governs the inferiour things by the superiour; and hence he subordinates nobler effects to nobler causes, for all causes must be perfecter then their effects; now in humane affairs there is no nobler effect then a Christian life, which consequently must proceed from the most noble cause; now we see this wholly to flow from Christ, whom therefore we must acknowledge to be the most perfect of all causes.

Secondary causes are the instruments of the primary or the first cause, a Christian life therefore proceeding from Christ as from his cause, we must confesse that Christ being

being a man crucified is the instrument of producing this excellent effect of Christian perfection ; now if Christ were not also God as he taught himself to be, there could be no man more wicked and execrable, and by this means Almighty God would use a most detestable instrument for the production of a virtuous life , which is extremely absurd.

The cause being the measure of the effect, by how much the perfection of the effect approaches nearer to the perfection of the cause, and becomes more like unto it, so much is it nearer its compleat and full perfection ; but we see the more like a man is to Christ Jesus in his life, the more holy he becomes, and in a manner Divine, which were not possible, unlesse he both were true God, and his Faith most intirely true.

We know causes by their effects,

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We know causes by their effects,

as

as we experience in medicines by their successe; ſeeing therefore that Philoſophers leave behinde them unto poſterity the rules of a virtuous life, and yet very few of them have attained unto any conſiderable degree of perfection, notwithstanding great endeavours done to that effect; nay, in the great abundance of the moſt excellent of them, none almoſt, without the direction of Chriſtian Faith, have been able to effect any thing; which yet we ſee in that ſhort time, and exactly to be brought to paſſe by Chriſtian Diſcipline in the congregation of the faithfull in every ſex and age: and the reaſon is, becauſe in deed there is no compariſon between Philoſophicall documents and the rules of Chriſtian life, neither for Morality nor Religion. For what is more admirable, then that a moſt lewd and wicked man (as we are taught by daily examples of

of all ages) as soon as he hath truly converted himself unto Christ crucified, becomes a new man, of proud and envious, humble and courteous; of covetous and sordid, liberall and bountifull; of lewd and luxurious, becomes continent and chaste, and as it were, with the principles of his Faith sucks in the respective antidotes for his particular vices, and with a manifold interest recompences and repays the debts of his former vices; which never any sect of Philosophers hath attained unto: whence it necessarily follows, that Christ is the principall or instrumentall cause of it, and a medicine which restores all morality and produces a most perfect life in his faithfull.

CHAP. VIII.

*That Christian Doctrine containing
the Grounds of Faith is from
God.*

THe reading, hearing, and contemplation of holy Scripture is the cause of Christian perfection, and the substance of our Religion; for the verity of Scripture is the object of Faith, and therefore the arguments of Faith are those which are drawn out of holy Scriptures.

We know that in the understanding of man there is no determinate knowledge of future contingencies, of which we can frame no acts nor science, which made the most famous and learned of all Philosophers conclude, that men could have no knowledge of future things subject to chance; and to have it was proper onely to Almighty God, who being
eternall,

eternall, comprehends in his eternity all things, the which are clearly laid open to his understanding, and of the which men cannot arrive unto the knowledge unlesse they be revealed unto them by Almighty God : seeing therefore that the holy Scripture almost every where, but chiefly in the Old Testament, doth foretell future contingencies, which depend on mens free-will, not onely in generall terms, but most exactly intending unto particulars, and that not those of one, ten, a hundred, or a thousand years, but hath foretold those of two, three, and four thousand years; and not onely those which befell unto the Jews, and those which were to be done by Christ his Spouse the Church: but as it were foretold all the prosperities and adversities which should happen to almost all Nations: as the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians,
C 2 Medes,

Medes Greeks, Romans, and the rest; and that just as it was foretold, it most exactly came to passe; we must necessarily confesse that the Scriptures came from God, and were not written by the industry and wit of men, and therefore those which as yet remain to be fulfilled, are to be held most infallible; as proceeding from the same Spirit who foretold those others, which have so admirably beyond all imagination been accomplished. And hence we clearly gather, that Almighty God hath a most speciall care of men, and exercises his divine Providence about humane affairs.

The foreseeing then of future contingencies appertaining onely to Almighty God, humane industry and sagacity cannot so order and dispose such combination of affairs, as the heroicall enterprizes and warlike exploits of famous men, but oftentimes
do

do beyond all expectation light on most unexpected and variable events. God onely therefore can determine these actions of men so that they may be signs of what is to follow in future ages ; but we see how those things which are already brought to passe in the new Scripture, or shall hereafter follow, are deciphered and delineated under most proper types and figures in the Old Testament.

Nor can it rationally be said that those interpretations are vainly raised or feigned by Christians, or composed without ground, because in so great a variety of things and times, in so manifold a composition of words, and in so great a diversity of Authors and sacred Writers , there could not be so exact an uniformity of the Old Law with the New, unless some understanding and divine Providence had framed a correspon-

dence of things which were to happen in their due times : nor can it be said that it was done by chance, for there cannot be found the least thing which is dissonant, impertinent, or discomposed, but every thing with an equall tenour and most sweet harmony makes up the concord ; so that that which is obscurely toucht in one place, in another is found manifest, so as the whole Scripture may seem to explicate it self ; this if it be unknown to those which are ignorant of holy Scriptures it is farre otherwise with those who have enriched their understandings with the treasures gathered out of the most sincere fountain of Verity : if therefore they desire to know the truth, let them with piety , humility and purity search into the same fountain of holy Scriptures, and questionlesse they will be of our opinion.

Wherefore Allegoricall Exposition

tion agrees onely to holy Scripture, because this alone is that which hath descended from Almighty God, as he exercited his all-seeing and celestiall Wisdome. I call an Allegory not the fabulous Interpretations Poets use, (and we also do expound Parables without an Allegory) nor a parabolicall and literall sense, which we use, when in a fable or parable, we do not intend to signifie that which is couched under the bare notion of the words, but onely that which is raised in our conceits by those words, and hath a further sense. But an Allegoricall sense we call that which contains three things: first, that without all fiction according to the proper signification of the words, the history both concerning the words, actions, and relations be plainly and sincerely recounted. Secondly, that there be some future thing signified by that thing which

is done at present. Thirdly, that those things which are done, be so fitly disposed and ordered, that when they are put in execution, there appear in them an insinuation of their future correlatives: whence it is manifest, that no created industry could ever couch such a confirmation of things in this sense but onely the divine Providence, which had an infallibility of all future contingencies.

Also the manner of speech and context of holy Scripture is so singular, that it could not have been used by any the most excellent and skilfull of all Christians, although they were most exercised in all kind of knowledge; for this manner of order and expression was onely granted unto them unto whom the holy Ghost vouchsafed to dictate and inspire it, because, although there interceded severall distances of times
between

between thole Hagiographers or holy Writers , and also some of them used more elegance of writing ; yet the substance of the expression was alwayes the same in all, which is a manifest sign that it was not Humane, but Divine.

The same is also approved by the effects , by which we gather the virtue of the cause ; for (as I have already shewed both in this book, and in another of the simplicity of a Christian life) there is no nobler effect then a Christian life, which cannot proceed out of any inferiour and created cause , but onely from the free gift and liberall hand of Almighty God , seeing therefore that that Doctrine is the chief instrument of a Christian life in which the whole form of Christian Religion doth consist , it clearly appears, that the same, and even the manner of speech could not be Humane but Divine :

for experience teaches, that humane learning little avail^d mankind to a happy and blessed life, because before this light appeared to the world, it was wholly drowned in a dark night of vices and confusion; but after the rayes of Apostolicall Doctrine displayed themselves, and the sound of Evangelicall Preachers was heard, all those clouds and mists were disperst, and the minds of men replenished with those beams became resplendent with a most shining serenity of truth and virtue.

But in case that some should deny things so long since past, I will relate some domesticall examples of my own experience; for I have experienced that men have been by this divine Doctrine and the manner of it, more illuminated, delighted, and converted, then by any other; wherefore since the Preachers of our times neglecting this sacred Doctrine, have
betaken

betaken themselves to Philosophical proportions and Rhetoricall ornaments, they have profited their Auditors very little, or nothing at all; whereas heretofore making use in their Sermons of a plain manner of speech, and content onely with the instruction and textuall frequency of holy Scripture, they have wonderfully inflam'd the minds of their hearers, who were so mutually delighted, that both in prosperity and adversity they did expresse their jubilee of mind, whence they were wonderfully stirr'd up to leade most blessed and virtuous lives.

I call God to witnesse that I have been oftentimes preaching unto the people, when I have made digressions to prove the profundity of the sacred Text unto the wits of this age; to the learmed sort by Philosophicall subtilties, and humane learning: I have plainly perceived out of a
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certain impatience and aversion of my Auditory very little attention in them ; and this not onely of the more ignorant. but even of the learned sort : but as soon as I turned my self again unto the Majesty of sacred Writ, either in the Interpretation of divers senses, or in the relation of the histories , I have seen an admirable attention in every one, all fixing their eyes upon me as if they had not been living creatures, but meer statues.

Yea , I have experienced , that when omitting other questions I have insisted upon the Exposition of sacred Scripture my Auditory hath been so delighted, so illustrated, and verity appearing. so touched to the quick by Divine influence, that they have immediately reform'd their lives, insomuch that being delighted with no other reading, or hearing any other thing, renouncing all terrene

rene delights and appetites, and stirring themselves up daily more and more, they have lived lives more divine then humane. And what I now affirm happen'd farre more frequently in those Primitive Ages, when Christian Religion was but newly planted.

This is that Doctrine which is more piercing then the two-edged sword; which imbelished the whole with virtues; which defaced the worship of the devils, and demolished the profane Oracles of their Idols; this is that which hath dispersed a world of errours, and hath been so fruitfull of all sorts of wonders as I will hereafter declare.

Our understanding the more purified it is, the more capable it is of Verity; and hence it is that so many most excellent and elevated wits, have not onely extolled the praises of this Doctrine by their writings,
but

but giving testimony of it by their preaching, life, and manners, have not doubted to spend their lives in its defence, which certainly they would no way have done, had they not seen almost a sensible and ocular evidence of its verity.

Further, truth gives testimony of truth, and falsity is the cause of division; other disciplines, arts, and faculties are not contrary, but as servants unto this; whence most learned and skilfull Doctours, who are most versed and exercised in all Sciences, do most constantly maintain, that there is no part of Philosophy which is repugnant or inconsistent, nay, which is not most fitly coherent with it; and therefore it is permitted all Christians to imploy their indeavours in the gaining of all Sciences, which would no way be tolerated, if it were detrimental unto the Catholique Faith: there are
only

only some few subject to superstition, which are forbidden, as that of Divination, being no lesse pernicious then unprofitable; which by the learnedst, even of the Philosophers, are hissed at, derided, and condemned, as not to be accounted amongst the Arts and Sciences. And if at any time there appear any contradiction between Philosophicall and Christian Principles, they are so apparantly reconciled by our Doctours, that it clearly appears, that all Philosophy is but the servant and hand-maid of the sacred Doctrin; for the easie dissolving of objections is the certain sign of Verity.

It is the nature of Verity, that the more it is impugned, the more (if it have a fit champion) is it brought to light, because our understanding having Verity for its object, is naturally inclined unto it, as to its proper perfection, and where the more
it

it shines, with greater delight it is embraced; but then Verity appears most, when it is most sharply impugned, because in the very discussion and conflict of disputation it manifests it self. Seeing therefore that Christian Doctrine having been so vehemently impugned by so many Philosophers and Tyrants, hath alwayes remained invincible and victorious, which the infinite volumes of Christians testifie, it is consequent that its truth proceeded from Almighty God; otherwise in so many conflicts it had not so long remain'd unconquer'd.

C H A P. IX.

*Christian Faith proved true out of
their use of Prayer and Con-
templation.*

AS Faith, and the reading holy
Scriptures, Auscultation and
Medi-

Meditation is the principall cause of a Christian life, so Prayer is its principall nourishment where it hath its growth and perfection : for by long experience we have found in our Religion, that all those who profit in our Religion, and have arrived to the highest degrees of sanctity, have attained it by frequent and continuall Prayer ; and we have observed, that they have taken such gust and complacence in it, that they have despised all other humane delights as vile, abject, and unworthy of them. Nor doth this happen onely to the most eminent and learned sort of those which flourish in sanctity, but it is commonly found in the simple and ignorant, as well men as women, and even in all those who have learned to leade a Christian life. By this effect therefore we may prove the Verity of our Faith.

Almighty .

Almighty God being a pure Act, the first Verity, and an infinite Light, the nearer a man makes his approach unto him, the more abundantly doth he partake this Purity, Verity, and Light ; But man doth not make his approach unto Almighty God by corporall pates , but by the purity of life, elevation of mind, and contemplation of Verity : Seeing therefore that there can be no life more candid and more sincere , then that of Christians ; and that then the mind of man is most pure, when it is wrapt up in a soaring and extaticall contemplation of the Divine perfections, it follows, that man is most possessed of this Verity and Light , as he is in the very act of prayer and contemplation : and seeing that we find by experience, that Christians as they encrease in the fervour of Devotion and frequency of Prayer, are more and more confirmed

firmed in their Faith, and inflamed with the love of Christ, and profit in virtue, we must confesse that the Faith, Verity, and Light of Christian Religion is Divine. Our understanding affecting Verity as its proper perfection, and abhorring Falsity as its greatest enemy; man is in nothing so disposed for the entertaining of Verity and rejecting of contraries, as in the very act of Prayer and Contemplation; by which he doth most stedfastly and ardently embrace the documents of Faith, which therefore cannot be erroneous.

Moreover, all Christians in their Prayers to Almighty God, do beseech him to grant that for the which they pray, by the merits of Christ; for in the end of every prayer they most commonly adde some such form, *Through Jesus Christ our Lord*: or, *Through Christ our Lord*,

Lord, and yet they obtain admirable and incredible graces from him; which if any should not believe, yet certainly they must grant that which by daily experience is manifest, that they obtain that which they principally seek after, the righteousness of a virtuous life, the quiet and joyfulness of mind; so as they preferre the pious tears of Devotion farre before any delights and pleasures of the world. Now certainly if Christ were not he whom our Faith proclaims him to be, they could not in so great a serenity of mind, and at so near a distance of so great a light be environed and buried in so great a darknesse; nor would Almighty God permit them to be so grossly deceived, or at least, if they were obstinate in an error, he would not grant their petitions.

Again, every cause disposing its matter for the producing its effect,
after

after it hath introduced its last disposition, immediately produces it, nor would it dispose the matter unlesse it meant to introduce the form; nor any cause of motion would produce it, if it intended not some end of the motion produced; but a just man unlesse he were invited and drawn on by Almighty God, who is the first cause of all things, could not elevate his mind unto him by prayer. Blisse therefore being the end of prayer and a virtuous life, Almighty God would not induce man unto those means of prayer and virtue, unlesse he intended to make him finally blessed. If therefore Christians making progresse in virtue and prayers become more grounded and settled in their Faith and Contemplation of Christ, their Faith cannot be but from Almighty God, by which he leades men unto blisse.

Every

Every cause grants (as I may say) unto its effect what it asks ; the effect asks of its cause its due and proper perfections, which then it is said to exact, when it is rightly disposed : for then the cause, if not otherwise hindered, delaies not the execution of the effect, infusing that quantity of perfection into it, which the degree of disposition doth exact; which immediate execution proceeds out of its facility and goodnesse, which of its nature is desirous to communicate it self. Almighty God therefore being the most sovereign good, questionlesse will more then other causes which have not so great goodnesse grant the petitions to this effect, especially unto those which are best disposed for the receiving his favours as are Christians, chiefly when they are in the act of Prayer and Contemplation ; but Christians ask nothing more then the
light

light of truth, according to that of the Psalmist, *Illumina oculos meos ne unquam obdormiam in morte*: Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death. And therefore Almighty God never denies them their request; but Christians the more they pray, the more they are confirmed in their Faith, therefore this our discourse is of greater force.

Further, if Christ were not God, to professe himself so would be the most supreme degree of blasphemy and detestation that could be. Now if Christians do pray to God the Father through Christ, whom they believe to be of the same nature with the Father and the holy Ghost, how doth Almighty God permit them in so great an error arising out of ignorance and simplicity, and doth not draw them out of it, knowing that they serve him with their whole affection, and humbly beg of him
the

the knowledge of truth ? or if their obstinacy be in fault, why doth he leave so great a wickednesse and treason against his Divine Majesty unrevenge ? or why doth he (as we see him) favour this error and impiety ? whilst bestowing so many and great gifts on them he questionlesse grants them that which they ask at his hands.

Our soul (as I have said) doth chiefly delight in Verity, and is disturbed, perplexed, and confounded with Falsity, in which it can take no rest ; if therefore the Faith of Christ were false, there would be no imposture so absurd and pestilent as it ; for how should innumerable men, especially just and wise-men, so employ themselves in the contemplation of Christ crucified, that for this alone they should despise all humane affairs, and should not onely most willingly suffer want of sustenance, labours,

labours, heats and cold, contumelies, threats, buffets, prisons, and most cruel racks, and torments, nay, death it self, but if they be without them, do wish to undergo them: truly we may say, the finger of God is here.

C H A P. X.

*The same Verity proved out of the
exteriour worship of Christians.*

I Have now shewed out of the principall cause of Christian life, to wit, the reading of holy Scriptures and exercise of Prayer, by which it is conceived, nourished, increased, and perfected, that our Religion is true and void of all falsity and deceit, which are the interieur causes of it. Now I will briefly run over the externall causes, which serve as instruments and props of the internall, to wit, the Sacraments and

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Cere-

Ceremonies instituted in order to them, all which appertain unto the exterior worship of Christian Religion; and that I may not spend time about every one in particular, I will treat of them altogether, as the different members of one and the same body. For all sacramentall Ceremonies, and even the other Sacraments having a reference unto the Sacrament of the Eucharist, they may be rightly styled one thing.

From this externall worship, if it be rightly observed, we see that Christians gain great improvement in their Devotion and Sanctity, for we see by daily experience even from the beginning of our Religion, to these very times by the records, attestation, and examples both of the Primitive and Modern Fathers, that those which piously and exactly practise this exterior worship, and do often administer or receive those

Sacra-

Sacraments and divine Myſteries, or do take upon them ſome one, which before they had not, do increaſe in perfection, and become daily more divine by their admirable ſanctity; and thoſe on the contrary which do in a cuſtomary way, without Faith and Religion familiarly and accuſtomarily frequent them, become the worſt of all men; which moſt plainly appears (to omit the examples of antiquity) in the Priests and Clergy of our times, then whom, if good, none better; but if evil, none are found more wicked and pernicious. For the good, as void of all affection to temporall things, onely inſiſt in the worſhip of Almighty God, for whoſe ſake and Faith they doubt not to ſpend their lives; thoſe which are bad are ſo exceſſive in their impieties, ſo puſt up with pride, envy, avarice, and ſo overwhelmed with

all vices, that as altogether lost, and which is worst of all, they know not how to think of amendment, and then chiefly, when by admonition, reprehension, exhortation, and good examples, by which others are wont to enter into themselves, they become more harsh, refractory and intractable. These things being so and as present before our eyes, being no way refragable, we must seek the reason why two such contrary effects proceed from the same Ceremonies of the same Sacraments. Now it is not repugnant to Philosophy that two contrary effects proceed from one and the same cause, if the matters subjected have contrary dispositions; for the earth by the beams and heat of the sunne of lost becomes hard, and ice by the same of hard is dissolved into a liquid humour. A tree, whilst it stands rooted in the earth, by influence of the Planets bringeth

bringeth forth blossomes and fruit, and by the same influence when it is rooted up, it withers : and truly those effects being so opposite, that the one is most excellent in those which perform those sacred Mysteries (as (I have said) with due veneration ; the other most pernicious in those which do abuse them, they cannot proceed from any vain or false cause ; & this not appearing so in men of any other Religion, there can be no other reason of it given, but their different and contrary worship of Almighty God ; for if the exteriour worship of Christian Religion did not depend of God himself, and did not contain in it self that divine Virtue and Verity in such a manner as instruments do contain the virtue of their principall cause, they would no way be able to produce, increase, and consummate the most excellent effect of Christian sanctity. This exteri-

our worship cannot produce this effect of its own proper force, because Christian life being wholly spirituall, and consisting in the intellectuall part of man, cannot substantially proceed from corporall instruments: for what can Baptisme, the anointing with oil and balm, the use of incense, the oblation of Bread and Wine, the Altars, and other such extrinsecall things of their own virtue, conduce to the perfection of the soul, unlesse they were the instruments of some superiour cause? For if these were introduced for a superstitious worship by any humane invention or diabolicall imposture, a life so holy would never proceed from so wicked and vain illusions.

But some may object that this worship is not the cause of perfection, but rather the exercise of virtues and credulity of men, by which they believe it to be divine: for the good
striving

striving daily by their virtues to root out their vices, do every day more then other grow perfect by those exercises. But we now seek the reason why others who are studious in the disciplines of virtue and morality, who either do not make use of these Sacraments, or do a long time refrain from the use of them, do swerve so farre from the integrity they aim at? Truly, if this worship were unprofitable or false, the more one should recede from it and cast it away, the more he would profit in the exercise of morall virtues: Priests also by deriding and contemning it would not grow more vicious, but more virtuous, the contrary of which daily experience teacheth.

Moreover, Almighty God being the supreme Verity, the more one is illuminated by him, the nearer he approaches unto him; but the more

a man is involved with falsity and errors, the farther he becomes distant from him : Now we know that those, who with Piety and Religion do frequent those mysteries, are so vehemently delighted with this Divine Worship, that oftentimes rapt out of themselves with the astonishment of their corporall part they remain immoveable, and their faces casting forth resplendent rayes of sanctity make them no lesse amiable then venerable ; which though it happen'd oftner in the Primitive Ages (as we reade) then now-adayes it doth, yet there are not wanting those whom we know, which enjoy those priviledges, and those not onely of the learned sort, but of the simple and vulgar people. Whence therefore is this kind of extasie ? whence this absorpt and pleasant contemplation ? whence this fervour of a spirit inflamed ? those
scalding

scalding lights, and sweet showers of devout tears? whence this ineffable jubilee of the Church melodiously rejoycing in her Hymns and Canticles? Truly, unlesse this worship were from God, and consequently true, there would be no where found so many dreams and lyes, it being wholly in a manner compacted of Types and mysterious Figures. For what ever is contained in the Mysteries, Sacraments, Temples, Altars, Mytres, Vestments, in all the world of Ceremoniall Rites, in the modulation of Hymns, and in the rest of the spirituall appurtenances would be a meer vanity and labour lost; all which, neverthelesse, are instituted for the worship of Christ. If therefore this worship were sustained by the means of falsities, men, at least the wiser and more perspicacious wits, would not out of the meditation of those Sacraments be so won-

derfully elevated to the contemplation of Divine objects, nor replenished with so great and celestially delight; for the understanding (as I have said) by falsities becomes more uncertain and dull, and at a greater distance from Almighty God; wherefore out of the contrary effect, we gather that this worship is true, and replenished with Divine graces and favours.

The order also and signification of the things which are performed in the Church, shew clearly that it is no humane invention but a divine disposition; for there is nothing in this worship irrational, nothing vain, but every thing hath its order and proper mystery, of which I shall not now speak in particular, although in the third book I shall touch some, as the necessity of the subject will require. If any one desires more fully to be satisfied of this Verity,
let

let him revolve the explanations of the Fathers, where seriously weighing every one in particular, he shall never be fatiated with admiration, to find in these Ceremonies no lesse order and harmony then in the universall work of Nature, and shall receive most excellent contentment and dilatation of heart; and if he be not of a perverse and obstinate condition, and have a mind wholly darkned, he shall be forced to confesse, that all those things are from God, and not invented and instituted by men.

C H A P. XI.

The same Verity proved out of the intrinsecall effects of Christian life.

I Have hitherto proved to the power of my mean ability the Verity of Christian Faith by Arguments drawn

drawn out of both the internall and externall causes of a Christian life, now therefore I judge it fit to prove the same by descending to the effects of it ; one of the principall effects, and immediately subsequent in that is, the peace and quiet of mind, the joy and liberty of the soul: for besides those examples which we reade and hear of our Authours and Predecessours, it is plainly seen in our age, that true Christians are not moved by the brushes and storms of persecution, but do persevere more immoveable in the Faith and Confession of Christ then before, and even glory in their tribulations and sufferings : we are to search therefore whence these effects proceed, and how it happens that the more they follow Christ in the perfection of their lives, they attain unto the greater liberty and serenity of mind.

Christi-

Christians themselves affirm this to be the reason of it, because (say they) this blisse of man consisting onely in our knowledge and contemplation of Divine objects, it is manifest that the desire and appetite of man cannot be bounded or limited by any ultimate and last end, which is not God himself: The quiet (therefore) and peace of mind that Christians possesse cannot proceed from any other thing, then that they have prefixt unto themselves that last end which of all others is the true one; whence if you should ask all Christians, what was their supreme end to which they aim at, questionless all would answer, that it was Almighty God; and therefore esteeming all worldly things as nothing in comparison of God, and hoping after their transitory life to obtain and enjoy him, they contemne and set at naught whatever the world contains.

tains. Hence it is, that being bereft and despoil'd of their worldly goods, they are not contristated; when carelesse of their lives, they offer themselves to death, that they may obtain Almighty God, their onely and supreme good: and as God is every where by his Essence, Presence, and Power, so is he in them also particularly by love and contemplation as the thing beloved is said to be in the party that loves. Now when the thing beloved is present, the mind of him that loves is delighted, and rejoyceth; and therefore Christians who live virtuously are extremely delighted with the presence of Almighty God, whom they internally do perceive as present. And because God is an infinite Power, when they experience his favours, flighting all other things, they fear nothing; and in this manner being armed with great liberty and confidence,

dence, they are not drawn from their purposes and resolves neither by fair means, nor by any terrors whatsoever. But a man not being able by his naturall forces by reason of the sensuall impediments and weaknesse of his understanding to arrive unto this serenity and liberty of mind, we must necessarily (say they) confesse that this tranquillity and peace of mind is bestowed upon us as a most supernaturall and divine gift, by virtue of which Almighty God and our eternall blisse is daily before our eyes.

That that is the true cause of peace, joy, and liberty of mind in the Christians it is plain, our soul being one of the same, and having all its powers radicated in the essence of it, as often as it is wholly imployed in the intense operation of some one power, it cannot use the service of another but very remissly; for example,

ample, If one be in an intense contemplation, he is not expedite in the use of the other powers of his soul; and if one be in great pain, he is not at the same time fit for contemplation; if therefore Christians were deceived by their Faith as by a vain credulity, no virtue of their superiour cause would assist them to confirm so great an error, and so they would be left onely to their naturall perfections, nay, even those would be much impair'd by so great a deprivation of Verity; how therefore could they so inviolably preserve so great a peace, joy, and liberty of mind amongst so many calamities and oppressions, especially so universally retain it, as not onely a few, but innumerable do? For the Philosophers vaunt of one or two at most which they pretend amongst them to have had this peace, quiet, and joy of mind; but we can produce
infinite

infinite of both sexes which in all parts of the world have possessed the tranquillity and liberty of mind in most excessive tribulations and torments, and this onely by invoking, praising, and glorifying Christ crucified. Moreover, we have found by the experience of our ancestours, and our own, that this peace, joy, and liberty of mind is augmented by the increase of Faith, and sanctimony of a Christian life, which certainly would not be so, unlesse there was expected by Faith, Hope, and the true Profession of them, a true and solid good; for as a man profits more in the righteousness of life, so is he brought more into the knowledge and profession of the truth and good which he seeks by eschewing the contraries, and therefore if Christians had not found a solid good in the perfection of their lives, their joy would not be.

be increased by it, but rather decrease as they should find themselves deceived in it.

This is very well confirmed out of the life of the religious, for to omit examples of past Ages (which I cannot comprise in this short Treatise) we daily see innumerable both men and women do betake themselves to strict Cloisters out of the desire of a more perfect life, forsaking their parents, kindred, friends, riches, and all pleasures together with their own liberty to live with strangers and externs, to whom they become so subject and obedient, that as for exterior subsisting and faculties they enjoy none, but those which by the command of their superiours are permitted them, as precisely necessary for their livelihood, and those to be changed and subtracted as things though common to all, yet uncertain to every one in particular; but

but as for the corporall perfections, they keep the chastity of their mind and body most incorrupted and entire. subduing their carnall and sensuall appetites, by watching, fasting, abstinence, and other mortifications. And as for the perfections of the mind, of which liberty is the chief, they renounce of their own accord all the use of it with a perpetuall and most strict obligation, conforming themselves wholly to the will and disposition of their superiours. Thus having forsaken all the goods which mortalls are wont to call theirs, to rejoyce in, and be delighted with, all these who aspire to this perfection live so contented and joyfull, that one would think they had even the abundance of all pleasures and delights, and by daily profiting in this way they become more full of tranquillity and alacrity, rejoycing and triumphing onely in the praises of Christ

Christ crucified; and if one should ask why they did so, they all unanimously would answer, that all their joy and delight is placed in Christ Jesus, and in those things which have dependance of him.

First therefore I say that no man can with reason suspect that this should proceed out of folly, seeing it hath been the continuall practice not onely of humble and simple men, but of innumerable eminent Saints and Doctours who would easily by reason of their wisdom and sanctity discern the error and folly of it, if it were vain and erroneous, for deceit and error cannot any long time consist with wisdom and virtue; such men striving to attain unto the height of perfections, there being none greater then that which they aim at (to wit) a Christian religious life, of which that state is accounted the highest and supreme degree, certainly

tainly there are none more apt then they to receive celestiaall illumination. If therefore the Faith were not true, questionlesse the vanity and deceit of it in many Ages, in so great a concourse of people of all conditions, especially by such wise and virtuous men had ere this been detected, nor had such men been able in so holy a servitude to preserve so great a peace and tranquillity of mind, and perpetually to take such comfort and joy in it. The contrary of which is manifest, for these are they who by their words and experience have confirmed, and do confirm it by their Writings, and as being set free, and onely subject to the graces and favours of Almighty God, do enjoy a most perfect peace and tranquillity of mind, and therefore all kind of deceit is farre distant from the Faith of Christ.

Every cause moved by its own
good-

goodnesse, which it seeks to extend and communicate, doth, as much as it may possible, direct its effect to its proper end, especially, when the effect is disposed for it, to which the more it approacheth, the more it is delighted and doth acquiesce in it. Now God is supremely good, and a most liberall and bountifull dispenser of his own goodnesse, and therefore he directs all his effects, which are well disposed, to their proper and deserved ends, that they may take up their final rest in them. Now there being no more intense disposition for the end of man then that of most approved and religious men, he will questionlesse direct them unto their wished end in which they obtain their desired rest in the enjoying their end; but these by their daily progresse are more confirmed in the orthodox Faith, rejoycing in Christ Jesus, do bend
their

their whole endeavours in gaining him alone, setting all other things at naught. Whence it appears, that there is no error or falsity in this Faith, otherwise, by the Divine direction, by forsaking more and more this false delight of mind, they would be directed to their true and wished for end and tranquillity.

All joy is grounded in some love or other, for love is the first act of the will or rationally appetite; from which the other acts have their influence. The joy therefore and jubilee of mind, which doth most unfeignedly appear in the countenances of those men, not consisting in any transitory, fading, or natural perfection of the soul, and all of them affirming with one voice and common consent, that it proceeds from the love of Christ crucified, cannot be grounded in any error or vain affection, because, the more uprightly
and

and holily such men did live, the more it would decay in them; for (as I have said) if the Faith of Christ were false, they would daily more apparantly perceive, that in their preposterous affections they were wholly deceived, and thence they would become more heavy and sorrowfull, but the sincerity of their deportments, the chearfulnesse of their countenances, that resulgent kind of sanctity in their exterior, for which they are in such reverence and veneration of all men, shew it to be farre otherwise, whilst we may see them alwayes in all events more pleasant, content and joyfull.

CHAP. XII.

The same truth proved out of the extrinsecal effects of Christian life.

ANother effect of Christian life is gathered from the exterior
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man, from their manners and deportment, which is in a manner a sign and argument of a certain kind of Divinity, by reason of which many are even enforced to esteem and reverence them: whence the venerable aspect of humble men have blunted and affrighted the proud and fierce minds of Tyrants; which we reade of that powerfull and barbarous King of the Hunns, *Attila*, though he could be satisfied by no slaughter or massacre of men, nor terrified by any power of enemies, yet at Ravenna, a Speech of *S. Leo* Pope set him packing out of Italy, and he contrary to his wonted custome, and not without the great admiration of his followers, seemed not onely to reverence the venerable Bishop, but to obey him in a manner commanding him. And in like manner *Totilas* the cruel Emperour of the Gothes, after he had destroy-

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ed so many thousands by innumerable massacres, wasted and consumed whole Nations, not being able to suffer the countenance of S. *Bennet* a poor Monk, fell down prostrate on his face, and could scarce raise himself, when the servant of God commanded and assisted him to rise. In like manner *Theodosius* the Emperour returning to Millain after his cruel slaughter of the Theffalonians, was by the authority of S. *Ambrose* chiding him, and reviling his cruelty, denied the entrance into the Church, untill he had by a publick penance enjoyn'd him by the Bishop, expiated his cruelty and injustice. I should want time, if I should recount the examples in this kind; but it is not for my present purpose to prove that which by daily examples is known to all, for I have often seen arrogant and wicked men in the presence of the holy and virtuous, both

to have changed their words, and with great sorrow and compunction of heart to have reformed their lives. For the divine Spirit doth adorn the exterior both of men and women, the younger with a wonderfull sweetnesse and grace, the elder men with the veneration of their white hairs, and makes them as the present matter requires, to become now amiable to some, and now again to some others formidable.

This effect in the exterior proceeds out of the supernaturall boun-
ce of the mind, that is, out of the grace of God adorning the understanding, will, and other powers of the soul, which we gather hence, that our soul vehemently altering our bodies by force of the imagination doth exceedingly change the countenance and visage: as by lascivious thoughts the body is stirred up to lust, and by the instigation of hatred it is in-

flamed with desire of revenge, whence we experience that the body is much altered by force of the imagination ; and by the alteration of the sensible appetite , and the commotion of the spirits , the face and visage is straightway changed, so that by fear men are wont to become pale and wan ; by anger and bashfulnesse red and blushing, and joy and sorrow make their severall impressions in the countenance. The reason is, because our understanding using corporall instruments and organs, what ever passes in the interiour, especially any vehement conceits, hath its influence into the corporall and exteriour parts, especially into the face and eyes , for we plainly discern in proud men an arrogance of look ; in the cruel, a stern and fierce cast of their eyes ; in the light ones , a subtil and unconstant deportment ; and in the lascivious, a wanton

wanton aspect ; nay, some malevolent old women with the very contagion of their looks are said to infect and fascinate little infants : to conclude, the good and evill habits of the mind, especially if they have taken deep root, can scarce by any dissimulation be so hidden, that they appear not in the exterior. Every cause therefore likening its effect, and every effect making an expression of its cause, this exterior beauty and comlineffe of Christians, and this honest and venerable manner of deportment cannot proceed from any other cause then the beauty of the mind and integrity of their life.

Which effect we daily see to be of such virtue, that as we daily experience there is nothing to be found more energeticall and efficacious for the conversion of sinners ; for we experience that the examples of

simple Christians living uprightly have profited men more then the perswasions of learned and eloquent Philosophers, nay, even the relations or beholding of miracles. For we often see eloquent and learned men whilst they are preaching high and elevated subtilties of knowledge to be hearkned unto with great attention, but their lives not corresponding to their words, they have profited the Church very little, but onely born away the reports and praises of their eloquence and wisdom. In past and present Ages there have been many miracles which little conducted to the amendment of life; for though we see multitudes of men flock together to see them, yet if we look more diligently into it, we shall find that very few have reaped the profit of bettering their lives by them, but by the perfection of a virtuous Christian, we both have
known

known and seen innumerable sorry and contrite for their sins, and converted unto Almighty God, and those not onely of the vulgar and simple sort of people, but most eminent in prudence and learning; of the which very many having felt the odour of a good fame and sanctity, contemning the pleasures and delights of the world, have betaken themselves to these happy and religious Societies and Monasteries, where loathing their former courses, they passe their lives with exceeding content, pleasure, and sincerity.

Hence it is manifest, that there is some virtue in Christians by which these admirable effects are produced, for a body hath no substantiall influence into a spirit, which we see manifestly expressed in the most formall body of all, to wit, the celestiall which suffer nothing from any corporall virtue; for the heavens suffer

not from the neighbouring fire, much lesse therefore shall a spirit suffer by any corporall influence. Those things therefore that are exteriour and visible in a Christian life being corporall, they cannot have any proper and substantiall influence into the soul, by which it may receive benefit, unlesse thereby some virtue be together infused into it; but in a Catholique and virtuous man the most eminent and chief virtue, from which an upright institution of life, exteriour beauty, and holy conversation doth proceed, is the immaculate Faith and Love of Christ crucified; for this Faith and Love being augmented, their exteriour ornaments and veneration are increased, and of greater efficacy for the conversion of men. Faith therefore which operates with love cannot be a deceit, seeing that falsity is void of all virtue, and cannot penetrate the heart of man.

Verity

Verity is more powerfull then falsity, but there was never any virtue or remedy found more efficacious for the living well and virtuously, then a Christian life, as we are taught by the comparison of Philosophers and other men, by whose learning and examples very few have been converted to a good life, and by the life of Christians innumerable do daily rise and leade most unspotted lives ; and therefore a vain and erroneous falsity cannot be the ground or root of this life, otherwise, men would more easily be reclaim'd to the amendment of their lives, by the learning and morality of Philosophers, then by Christian examples, which we find most false by experience.

Moreover Almighty God being the first mover without whom there is not the least motion, and doing all things by his wisdom, he subordi-

nates the nobler effects to the nobler causes ; but the most excellent of all effects is a Christian life : Almighty God therefore by exhortations, and chiefly by internall inspirations stirring up men to this life by most conspicuous examples of the faithfull , to the end that the cause may produce an effect like it self , as the sunne and men do generate a man , it follows necessarily that a perfect Christian is the noblest cause and most perfect instrument of producing this effect : Therefore the virtue of this instrument co-operating with Almighty God is not a falsity , but a most supreme Verity ; but this virtue is Faith inflamed with a burning charity , as I have shown ; our Faith therefore is most true.

CHAP. XIII.

The same confirmed by the wonderful works of Christ, and first by his Power.

WE have proved now by the assistance of Almighty God the Verity of Christian Faith out of the manifest effects, which daily are seen in the Orthodox Church, and although there might be manifold other arguments brought to the confirmation of it, yet having regard to my intended brevity, I will argue onely out of those events of former Ages, of the Verity of which the whole world is a sufficient witness. Wherefore, as Philosophers by the effects which they saw in naturall things were moved to search into the causes of things, we in like manner setting before our eyes the triumph of Christ, which

which we have heretofore described, will most exactly, as farre forth as the matter requires, search into the causes of those effects. And as the Philosophers contemplating the nature of things, out of the greatnesse, the wonderfull order and perfection of the whole world, did conclude that the cause of it was Almighty God, who was more powerful, wise, and perfect then all others, whom they termed the first principle and mover of all things; so we contemplating the triumph of Christ crucified, will shew him to have been, and to be beyond all comparison more powerfull then the feigned Gods of all other Religions, and to have done greater things, and produced perfecter effects then any, and with an ineffable and infinite wisdom and goodnesse to have infinitely surpassed them. Which done it will be clear that this God,
is

is the great Lord and King above all other Gods.

I will begin with the effects of his Power, and placing his triumph before your eyes, I argue in this manner. Either this Jesus the crucified Nazarean, whom the Christians adore is true God, and first cause of all things, or he is not; if he be, the disputation is ended, because, if he be God, the Christians Faith, and his universall Doctrine and Religion must be true: if he be not, it follows, that Jesus the Nazarean was a most prodigious monster, of a most inexcogitable pride, and unheard of arrogance, whilst being a pure creature and mortall man, he would be esteemed as the onely supreme Deity, and adored above all others: whence we might justly tearm him the most lying and worst of all creatures, nay, even the most notorious of all foles, for undertaking

dertaking a businesse of so great consequence ; for what is more contrary to reason , or what can be found more mad and ridiculous, then that an inferiour and poor beggarly man, without all power and riches, onely by virtue of an unpollished and naturall eloquence, nay, even by the torments of a most horrible death should dare to strive against and contend with the divine Majesty, and despoiling it of its due honour, should dare to involve in a new and unheard of Religion all men, as well powerfull and learned, as the most weak and ignorant , and at the same time should command the Ceremonies and religious Rites of other Gods to be demolished ; and the whole world inured and accustomed for so many past Ages to their own fashions, like an impetuous and violent river, to be turned now quite out of its channel and changed,

changed, and that he alone was to be adored for God? And all this, not onely in his life time, but much more after his cruel and violent death; and with this condition also, that men should not onely love and adore him, but for his love sake should undergo the most difficult things, most repugnant to nature, and of quite intolerable suffering: and to conclude, not being terrified by any excesse or atrocity of torments, they should most promptly and willingly undergo the last of all terrors, Death it self.

Here let me ask thee what ever thou art, if any mortall should intend to do such things as these, and should consider them in his mind, and should manifest unto you this secret, what wouldst thou say? Wouldst thou think any other man so mad as he? Wouldst thou not judge that he were so much the
more

more to be laughed at, by how much those things did seem more impossible? If therefore Jesus the Nazarean be not God, relying upon what assistance hath he with a continuall fight so prevailed against his own and all other nationall Laws, Princes, Wise-men, and against the whole world struggling against him, the infernall and supernall powers, and chiefly against the supreme Creatour of all things? That he is esteemed equall to God, adored with equall veneration, and that invincibly he hath obtained all these things amidst so great and continuall repugnances of so many Ages; wherefore, O ye Jews! hath God your Governour and Conserver of the world permitted so great a wickednesse so long unrevengeed? And you, O ye Gentiles! why have not your Gods expelled him? How hath this despicable man nail'd to a
Crosse,

Crosse, and dead, left behind him the power to do so many and so great things? Who ever of those (I will not say men) who were esteemed as Gods, was to be compared to this? Seeing their brawls and contentions, their sacriledges and incests were esteemed nefarious even by their own sectaries.

Do you not see how impudently some have dar'd to compare *Apollo-nius Thyaneus* with our Christ? For who can be any way compared with reason to him, either of the princes of Philolophy; as, *Pythagoras Socrates, Plato*, and the rest, or of the most excellent and famous Kings and Emperours; as, *Alexander, Cesar*, and others? of whom none professed himself to be God, nor have they even altogether performed the least part of those things which have been done by Christ and his Disciples: for what great matter hath

hath that crafty commander of the Arabians *Mahomet* done? he never affirmed himself God, true it is, by his eloquence and power, by his arms, gifts, and a luxurious licence of pleasures, he drew unto him a barbarous and unskillfull multitude; and did not he give a most honourable testimony of Christ? Assuming to himself nothing above humane forces and policy, but such was not Jesus the Nazarean; never did any mortall propose more difficult things to be believed and done then Christ did; for he absolutely commanded the belief of a Trinity, to wit, the Father, Sonne and holy Ghost, the same one God three really distinguished persons, which yet being identified in substance, were one, and the self same entity. Then he commands himself to be believed as God the Sonne, being the same with the Father and the holy Ghost, and
that

that he is at the same time true man,
the sonne of the Virgin *Mary*,
whom he also commands to be ado-
red as the true Mother of God;
that the Crosse also, which was al-
wayes esteemed as the instrument
of equivalent ignominy, should be
held in most supreme honour and ve-
neration, as the chief sign of our
salvation : In his last supper he
commanded by his last Will and
Testament, that we believe that
Bread and Wine by virtue of a few
words of Consecration were really
and substantially changed and tran-
substantiated into his Body and
Bloud, notwithstanding, that the
wonted accidents of Bread and
Wine persisted, and that we should
under those signes of Bread and
Wine adore him, and receive him
as nourishment, and a celestially *vita-*
ticum by which he promised us eter-
nall life, and that no body could en-
ter

enter into the kingdome of Heaven
unlesse they were born again of wa-
ter and the holy Ghost. Moreover,
he commanded that all his Scri-
ptures should be believed to a rittle
without hesitation, doubt, or dero-
gation, notwithstanding they con-
tain things most difficult to humane
understanding, without the belief of
all which, there was no salvation.
Nor is this constant and firm vene-
ration of those things sufficient, un-
lesse contemning visible things, and
loving the invisible, we do patiently
undergo all kind of persecutions, *In*
patientia enim vestra possidebitis
(inquit) animas vestras: In your
patience you shall (saith he) possesse
your souls. He promised his fol-
lowers and servants in this life, not
riches, honours, and dignities, but
the clean contrary. to wit, poverty,
ignominy, oppression, and what is
more, outrages, blows, banishment,
gaols,

gaols, conflicts, and torments, by suffering which for his sake, he promises us an unspeakable beatitude; promising things unto us which exceed the understanding of man, as Glory, for example in heaven with the Angels, the Resurrection of the bodies, and *that which neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath ascended into the heart of man:* These things notwithstanding being so, he brought to passe whatever he pleased, although the world fought against him. For innumerable men of all sorts and conditions, have so received and maintained this Doctrine, that they chose rather to leave their lives then to forsake their Faith. Kings also and Princes (as we see at present) humbly inclining themselves under the yoke of Faith, are obedient to his inferiour Ministers. Let us set therefore before our eyes Christ as a poor man, accounted formerly and

and esteemed the sonne of a Carpenter, and contemned by those that knew him, and let us ask him what he thinks : Now let him answer, I, though a poor man and a stranger to the world, do intend to bring the whole world under my Laws, and do intend that men do adore me as a true God, together with my Father, and the holy Ghost, and that they also worship the Crosse, on which being nail'd, I shall die a most ignominious and cruel death, between two theeves, and after this cruel death, that they do most devoutly and honourably reverence the Instruments and Reliques of my torments, and preserve and place them amongst their chief and precious jewels and treasures. And that above all things with Faith and their best Devotions. they adore this Sacrifice of Bread and Wine, as the true substance of my Body and
Bloud

Bloud, and that by the Water of holy Baptisme, they believe their souls to be cleanted from all spot of sinne, and that they are sanctified by the anointing of Oyl and Balm; and lastly, that receiving and observing my whole Doctrine entirely, they esteem it as a great wickednesse to derogate ought from it, even to the last tittle; and that they honour and make their addresses unto my Mother, being sanctified with an uncorrupted and perpetuall Virginity, and esteem her next unto God, as Lady and Queen of the Universe, by a speciall prerogative exalted above all the quire of Angels, and that they make their supplications to those which from being Fishermen I have chosen to be my Disciples, and that they adore their very bones, ashes and other reliques: wouldst thou not judge this poor man, thinking and speaking such things

things of himself to be a sot, fool, and worthy onely to be laugh-
ed at?

If further whilst thou laugh'st at him, he should go on, and say it is my will, that they not onely do most firmly belceve all those things, but that for this reason, they lead their lives most continently and uprightly, and for my promise given them of an invisible happinesse, they despise all terrene and sensible things, and to shew their most ardent affection towards me, they do most willingly undergo poverty, thirst, famine, toils, miseries, torments, and most cruel deaths, and that they choose rather all these things then deny the least tittle of my Doctrine? Wouldst thou not think this man wholly mad and out of his wits? If he should adde to this, it is my pleasure that all this be brought to passe against the resistance of the whole

whole world , against Kings and Princes, against all the Religions and sects of Gods and men ; I intend to fight against infernal powers to gain the victory. and triumph over them, questionlesse thou wouldst burst into a louder laughter.

But if being asked by what confidence or arms he meant to effect those things ? he should answer, by no other then by the preaching of himself and his Disciples ; and because eloquence hath a great force to perswade the minds of men (lest any of his victories should be attributed unto it) that he should affirm that faculty no way to fit his purpose, and that his Ministers should bring those things to effect, without all art, by a sober, modest and simple narration of those things, thou wouldst ascribe this to a higher degree of madnesse. If he should go on, I know that for my sake an infi-

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nite multitude of men would perish; that the more there die, the more the number of the faithful shall increase, and my Faith shall be propagated to the farthest ends of the world; for the blood of my Martyrs shall, as the Seed of the Church, yield a fruitfull harvest of my Believers; and I will deliver unto one of those my Fishermen, and to his Ministers, which shall never fail, by a continuall inheritance the perpetuall Sceptre of the Kingdome of Heaven, and I will make to stoop the supreme City and Lady of the world, and the Emperour himself to kisse the feet of my Substitutes. Oh! if thou shouldst hear him say so, with what furies, I will not say madnesse, wouldst thou think him to be agitated? what peals of laughter wouldst thou not bestow upon him?

Hearken to him a little further, there shall be infinite Books written

ten of me, by most excellent and learned men, which shall praise and magnifie both me and my Doctrine, and extolling it above all others, shall defend it with their whole forces; my Priests shall with great reverence of the people, with solemn pomp and magnificence, and with torches lighted proclaim the same, which all the auditours shall receive uncovered with a reverend and most humble attention; would not these things seem dreams unto thee?

Hear him conclude, being armed with this onely weapon, without all doubt I will bring all those things to perfection, and with an invincible power, I will prove my self victorious, and will bring the whole world under my obedience, nor shall there ever any prevail against these ground-works and foundations of my Religion.

Whilst he assevered these things,

who would not judge that this were a work impossible to all mankind, to Nature and the heavens and onely feizible to the divine Omnipotence ?

Now all these things being brought to effect, it is manifest that it is the onely work of the divine Majesty, and that this Faith of Christ was onely established by Almighty God alone : for was there ever any of the antient wizards, or Philosophers, or *Mahomet*, or some one of the most powerfull Kings that ever did the like ? Or are there any Gods of the Gentiles and Nations to be compared to this ? These kind of exploits have not been heard of from the origin of things ! let them blush therefore and be confounded which judge of Christ as Infidels.

Nor may these things be said to happen by chance, seeing that the Prophets and *Sibylls* foretold them
long

long before, and the antient and incorrupted Monuments of the Jews and Gentiles give testimony of them, in which is written, that those things were not onely revealed by Almighty God to come to passe, but that Almighty God did himself promise to perform them.

As in naturall things there are some causes necessary, and others, as of most things are indifferent, so in arguments and intellectuall discourses, some there are which necessarily enforce the understanding to assent, which are called demonstrations; others are called learned, dialecticall proofs, which though not alwayes, yet for the most part incline the understanding, though it do not firmly tie it to the asseriton; others again are so weak as they scarce incline it at all. Wherefore, although in matters of small consequence, as in Mathematicks, there are found many

demonstrations notwithstanding in naturall things there are found very few, but in the high and most eminent things, as also in moralls there are found no demonstrations at all. But the light of our understanding is so weak, that it doth not discern the proper difference of things : for the Philosophers use accidents instead of differences, and therefore they are ignorant of the proper definitions of things ; the essence therefore or definition of the thing , being the mean or middle term of a demonstration, it follows, that few or no demonstrations are found in naturall things ; wherefore, it is very hard to settle or ground our understanding in naturall and morall Sciences much more in metaphysicall, and most of all to apply our understandings, and altogether to attract our will , that we draw it from vices to virtues ; for the sensuall part, being opposite
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to the spirituall and rationall, it is very difficult that the affection follows the understanding, but of all things it is most difficult to make both Powers so agree, that the fruit of good works do issue from them, and persevere unto the end of our lives; for of every Philosophicall Thesis there are almost as many opinions as heads, and very few of them effect what they teach, and scarce any of them have persevered unto the end of their lives without corruption of vices, and if any one such be found, they account it a miracle. Now if the very chief of those Philosophers could not convince the understanding of man to beleeve those few truths which reason it self dictates, and are naturally ingrafted in us, as that there is a God, and that he doth exercise his Providence about humane affairs; that good is to be sought after, and evill

avoided, and others of the like nature ; and if they could not reconcile the affection in a very few things with the understanding for their well-doing, that they did not finally disagree, by how much would they be lesse able to perform it in things which exceed the bounds of reason: But the Disciples of Christ with their onely preaching did unite the will and understanding of an infinite multitude of men, and , as it were, transfixing them, did enforce them to believe and love those things, unto the which neither demonstration it self, nor any humane reason could any way arrive, so that for the promise of heaven, they have esteemed all earthly things as drosse, and becoming indefatigable in their labours, they could not be removed from their purposes , neither by fair means, threats or torments. Now by what virtue have poor ignorant
Fishermen

Fishermen done these things? certainly by no Humane power, but Divine. For nature hath expressed the whole forces she had towards mortalls in the Philosophers, and yet we see, she hath not had in them the force to accomplish those things. Certainly if the Faith of Christ were stuffed with lies, questionlesse a few Fishermen could not have done those wonders in confirmation of it, nor could the Faith it self have persisted in its full force so long time against so powerfull and manifold oppositions.

Moreover, if Christ crucified and his Fishermen drew so efficaciously the whole world to the Divine love as I have said, they could not do it by plain and bare words, for grave, wise, and learned men are not led away with bare words; wherefore it is certain that they confirmed their words with miracles, which were so

many, so stupendious, that farre surpassing the limits of nature, they could onely be wrought by Almighty God, who alone is the authour of miracles. But the Divine Majesty doth not give testimony to the confirmation of lies, but of Faith, and therefore the Faith of Christ, in confirmation of which they are done, cannot be false. Now if any should deny miracles, this would be the greatest miracle of all, that those manifold and admirable things, of which I have made mention should be done without miracles by Christ a poor man, and those ignorant and unpolished Fishermen his Disciples. Therefore, whether Christ and his disciples did shine with miracles or no, certainly an infinite power surpassing all the power of all Gods, doth appear in his works; but as of all causes that is the first which hath more power then the rest, so amongst Gods

Gods, he is truly to be esteemed the true God, which is most eminent above all others in power, as is Christ our most invincible Conquerour.

CHAP. XIII.

The same concluded out of the Wisdom of Christ.

I Will now shew that his Wisdom was inferiour to none. First, then it is the part of Wisdom to order and dispose things rightly, but in all things which are to be directed to their ends, the rule of Government ought to be drawn from the end of them; for then every thing is rightly disposed when it is directed to its proper end, for the end of every thing is its supreme and chief good; whence those that in the studies of arts do so regard the end, that they direct all other subordinate things,

things unto it, are called masters of that art. As in Architecture, those work-men which carry the stones, wood, lime, and other requisits are not said to be architects, but those which give the chief disposition, proportion, and form to the building. In artificiall things, they having onely their particular ends, in which the end of man doth not consist; he that shall be skilfull in those is not to be term'd absolutely wise, but with a restriction to his art. He therefore is rightly to be styled absolutely wise, who observing the supreme and consummate end of humane life, doth dispose all fit means and all his actions and operations unto it; But Jesus the Nazarean efficaciously teaching his Disciples and Followers, shew'd them the true end of mans life, and the true means by which they were to arrive unto it, and this not onely by his Word, but
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by his lively example, so that no end of humane life can be found out, or imagined better, or more perfect, then the life of Christians. Wherefore it is clear that neither amongst the Gods of the Gentiles (suppose the impossibility of their Deity) nor amongst men there ever was or could be found a wiser then Christ.

The sign of a knowing man is to be able to teach, for when a man is arrived unto the perfection of a Science he can easily teach it others, as in naturall things for example. When a man hath attained unto a perfect age, he is capable of propagating mankind by generation of children: but there was not any other God or man from the beginning, who taught a more profitable wildome then that of Christians, or who taught it with greater facility: as for the learning of Philosophers, it is obscure, and scarce to be learned
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in long time, and perplexed with many difficulties and errours, by reason of which the very masters themselves are very uncertain and anxious, as I have said before that they were concerning the divine Providence, and in the end of humane life, but after the supreme wisdom of our Saviour and Master Christ appeared, the world was so illustrated in a short time with the Doctrine of the divine Providence and Goodnesse, of the immortality of the soul, of the end and beatitude of man, of the means to arrive unto it, and many other documents that Christians of both sexes, even in their tender age and infancy did more clearly penetrate those things, then famous Philosophers had done by their great industry and study. And they became so constantly grounded in this Doctrine, that they had rather suffer a thousand torments
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even to death it self, then impiously deny the least tittle of the Doctrine of Christ.

The virtue of the cause appears the greater, the further it operates and the quicker; wherefore, the more quicker that Wisdome hath its effect in men, the more questionlesse is its power. 'Tis not the work of a principall virtue or industry to make those wise which are docile, and have their minds greatly disposed for wisdom: but suddenly to teach fools, children, dullards, girls, reprobates, and most wicked men, and strumpets wisdom, and convert them unto a good life, exceeds all humane forces. But our Christ Jesus did not onely convert innumerable of those, but also of prudent and learned men presently, with onely a beck, and made a change in their lives by the true compunction of their hearts, and daily doth not cease from those effects,

fects, which none ever of the Gods or men have done ; and therefore his Wisdome and Doctrinē is to be preferred before all. When Nature is determined to do something in particular, it is not to be esteem'd the part of any rare virtue to effect it in naturall things by means which are naturall, as if a spirituall creature by the application of fire to a house should straight burn it, which was not hard for any man to do ; but if it were performed by contrary causes as by striking fire out of ice to raise a great combustion, this would be esteemed a work of great virtue. It is a sign therefore of a supreme and infinite virtue to produce all naturall effects without any naturall instrument, or to do any thing with any instrument, or to do it with the instruments ordained for contrary effects. Wherefore, to teach wisdom by due and naturall means according

according to the wonted capacity of men as the Philophers do, is no matter of admiration ; but to teach us the supreme and ineffable wisdom by the folly of the world, that is by those things which men commonly esteem foolish and absurd, and to convert those follies into the instruments of divine Wisdom, and to place the chief Wisdom in them is a most difficult work, and to be esteemed onely Divine. For if the horreur and contumely of the Crois, together with the scorns, buffets, stripes and torments, which Christ in his death did suffer, be rightly considered, there could be found nothing more foolish and horrible then the Crosse, before Christ was nailed unto it ; but Christ by means of it did intuse into the wood, the most sovereign of all Wildomes, as all Christians do profess and testify by daily experience ; therefore
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the supreme and divine Wisdome hath been onely found in Christ Jesus.

Also, Wisdome being the honour and badge of Divine things, certainly that Wisdome is to be preferred before all others, which teaches men Divine things better then all others: but this hath been done by none so well as by that of Christ; therefore this must be the most excellent of all. But that it is so appears out of the Writings before Christ, which are not contained in his Doctrines, which if they be compared with the Books and Monuments of Christians, thou wilt easily confesse that there were very few things taught by the Philosophers and other Authours. Nay, what is more, Christian Doctrines doth extremely conduce to the increase and perfection of Philosophy it self, seeing it doth so wonderfully every way lay open the knowledge
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of Divine things , that almost all Christians do professe , know and teach those things which before them were scarce understood by the Prophets themselves. And after the preaching of the Apostles men did so blush at their own errours , and strive to purge themselves of them, in such sort, as if having wandred in a dark night and weltered in the dirt of their errours , being environed on a sudden with a great light , beholding their impurities and stricken with shame and confusion they had endeavoured to cleanse themselves ; for both the Philosophers and Poets being confounded at the worship of their Idols, at their old wives stories, and impure dotage , the light of Christ once shining (at whole abundant lustre they were dazled) they endeavoured to make good one lie with another, to feign their Allegoricall Interpretations, when they saw they

they could by no other means hide and justifie the wickednesse of their Gods, and their vices so enormous that the worst of men would be ashamed to own them.

It belongs also to a wise man not onely to have the knowledge of easie things, but of those which are most difficult, and to be able to teach the same, and defend them against their adversaries ; no man ever taught more difficulties of Divine things, nor ever made them appear with more ease then Christ, who did not onely instruct his own few Disciples, but even the whole world. And Christians do easily defend those documents against infinite opposers, that whoever shall have read their Arguments and Books they will not be able to doubt, that the verity of them proceeded of an eternall and incomparable Wisdom. Our adversaries fought
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against them most exactly, not onely with Sophistty, with captious and syllogisticall contentions, but with contumely, threats. the sword and death it self, over all which their invincible Verity remained triumphant. Truly, if the Tyrants had contended with the Princes of the Philosophers with both arguments and torments, as they did against Christians, I am confident they would have been contented to deny their very first Principles; but Christ proposing those things which cannot be found out by naturall reason, and defending them both from the sword and from all the wisdom and injuries of the Gods and Philosophers both, by his solid force established them for all eternity.

Moreover, Christians Faith is either true or fictitious; if true, we are agreed; if fictitious, even thence may be drawn an efficacious argument:

ment : That Christ was the most understanding and wise of all others which found out such difficult and sublime things, and did so perswade them unto mortalls, that they would not be infringed or destroyed by any device or humane reason or power. That Christian Doctours themselves do make profession of the science of Philosophy, and although those things which Christ taught were above the sphere of reason, yet they shew that they are no way repugnant unto Philosophy; and that other Sciences do rather serve to confirm them then otherwise. They do not as certain superstitious and ignorant people, who reject or contemn Philosophy, or some other true Science, challenging all things which are well said as their own, from others whom they say are unjust possessours of them. Now who is there to be found wise, cautious, and
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subtill which can maintain any fiction and lie against all the arguments and reasons of so many wise and learned men, and shew that they are consonant to all Philosophy? Truth certainly is consonant to truth, and all truth is dissonant to falsity. If therefore the Philosophers not without great difficulty have been able to preserve and protect Verity inviolate against their adversaries, by how much lesse will they be able to defend falsity being of its own proper nature weak, against violent and subtill opposition? therefore although it were granted that this Faith were fictitious, yet we should necessarily conclude that Christ had the most piercing and elevated wisdom of all others, who by his invitation hath drawn men unto him by most sublime and uninvestigable documents, and hath enforced them by a sacred inspira-

inspiration to leade virtuous and blessed lives. But seeing that things inconsistent cannot hang together, as for example, a false and true Philosopher can have no true coherence; and that by his Doctrine men are directed as by a straight rule to a virtuous life, we must confesse that his Faith and Doctrine is true, and that he is the wisest of all Gods and men.

Hence it is that men most versed and skilfull in all Sciences, and most eminent for the sanctity of their lives, have embraced that Doctrine of Christ as the supreme Wisdom, and have extol'd it with their praises, magnified it with their Works and Monuments, and confirmed it with the testimony of their lives. Which had they not most certainly known that it was delivered unto men by Almighty God, certainly they had not undergone so many labours, toils
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and agonies for the defence of it.

The Wisdome of the greatest Master then chiefly appears, when by a compendious epitome he brings his Disciples to the end and last perfection of all Sciences, but this Christ alone hath effected; for every Science is either rationall or reall, as for rationall, it is either Logick, Rhetorick, or Poetry, which treats of *ens rationis*, or the entity of reason: and their end is by divers Arguments and Exhortations to force the understanding of man to assent to that which they intend. To this Christ himself hath above all other without all difficulty brought his Disciples; which most appears out of this, that whereas they were Fishermen formerly ignorant and unskilfull, and innumerable others of the simpler sort, who having once received this Doctrine have with most efficacious persuasions chang'd,

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as it were, the face of the whole world, which neither the force of arms, nor other endeavours of all Wisdome (if we consider it aright) could ever have done. As for reall Science it is divided into practicall and speculative; the practicall is that which is morall, which Christian Discipline doth teach so exactly, and with such facility and celerity, that the Philosophers (as I have said before) can find no defect in it. If the Science be speculative, it either abstracts from all sensible and intelligible matter, and so it is that which is termed Divine, in the which Christ did so surpasse all others, that he is not onely the chief, but that there is no comparison to be made with him: or it abstracts onely from sensible matter and not from intelligible, and this is called Mathematick, by which one considers the form, and hath no regard

to the good or end of it, (as the Philosophers say) : and for this reason, the Doctrine of Christ onely attending the good and end of things imparts little to this Science, because it doth not appertain or conduce to salvation ; yet if there be any profit to be gathered out of it which helps to a good and virtuous life, this the Christian Doctrine laies claim unto; for in holy Scriptures there are numbers and figures, which are most fitly disposed and ordered for the improving morality, and the contemplation of the Divine perfections, so that neither in the least Disciplines of Philosophy hath not this Doctrine its wholesome and profitable influence ; or the Science abstracts from neither sensible nor intelligible matter, and this is naturall Philosophy, to whose greatest good and last end Christian Doctrine doth by divers means both easily and with great

content and pleasure lead us. For the knowledge of naturall things in it self, is not that supreme end unto which we strive by them to attain unto, but by these corporall things we are brought unto the knowledge of invisible objects, which the Christian Doctrine doth afford with great satisfaction in great abundance, whilst it represents most admirably, and to our great satisfaction the invisible perfections and mysteries of Almighty God, in all naturall things as in so many mirrors; Christ therefore was the most wise Master of all, who most easily brought the whole world to the last end and highest perfection of all Sciences.

To conclude, the delights of the understanding farre exceed the pleasures of the senses, and that which chiefly appertains unto the understanding consists in the knowledge of the first Verity, from which, as
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it is most perfectly conceived, arises the greatest delight. The sign therefore of the sovereign Wisdome of Christ, is the supreme delight which Christians enjoy in his contemplation, then which there hath been none hitherto found so great: for there have been innumerable, as now-a-dayes there are, which for the contemplation of the first Verity contained in the Christian Doctrine, forsaking all the pleasures and enticements of the world have betaken themselves to desert and sequestered places, and which is most of all, they have made such progresse in that contemplation, that a man would think they were not men, but petty Gods and Angels upon earth; for being, as it were, elevated above the terrene Sphere of carnality they do not onely not affect it, but do not so much as vouchsafe to look upon it, having within themselves like

Gods and Angels that which satisfies and suffices them. Out of all which we may easily gather, that the Doctrine of Christ is the chief of all, and that Jesus Christ himself is the true Wisdome of the eternall Father, which onely was able to bring so many and so wonderfull things to passe.

C H A P. XV.

*The same Verity confirmed out of
the Goodnesse of Christ.*

I Have now shown that Jesus the Nazarean hath so farre surpassed all other men, and all the Gods of the Gentiles in Power and Wisdome, that if any believe there is a God, he must questionlesse judge no other beside him to be so. It remains that I make the same appear out of his Perfection and Goodnesse, by proving that he is the soveraign

reign of all Goods and the last end of humane life, in which we must in the first place observe, that humane actions are directed to some end or other ; for the actions of men as they are humane proceed questionlesse from the free will or election of man , by which he differs from brutes. Now the object of the will is some good or end prefixt, and therefore there being no infinite or endlesse proceffe of those prefixt ends (otherwise the motion of every appetite would cease) it is necessary there be one last end of man, for it is impossible there should be two substantiall last ends of any thing , seeing that beyond the last end there remains nothing to be sought after. That is called the last end which doth so satiate the appetite of any thing that it formally includes, or at least subordinates all those things which can be desired or

sought after, and therefore there is but one and the same last end of all men. Neverthelesse we must know that all men do not agree about their last end, as it is taken materially that is, where and in what it is found; although all agree in the formall conceit of it, that is, in the nature of it, and in what it consists, because the nature of the last end of mankind is the supreme felicity of it. Now all men agree in the desire of their chief felicity, yet all do not think that that felicity consists in the same thing. Having formerly proved that the last end of humane life is the first Verity and first cause, that is, Almighty God, if I shall now shew that Jesus Christ is this last end, it will manifestly appear that he is the first Verity, the first Cause, and true God, and the supreme good in which most assuredly doth consist the nature of the last end.

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Which that we may more clearly understand, we must consider, that when any nature is directed; or affected towards any thing as to its last end, that by the admixtion of another nature which distracts it, it may be so hindred, that it do not prosecute its end at all, or at least but very remissly; for example, a weight or ponderous body naturally tends downwards, and all gravity, or such bodies inclin'd by the form of their weight, or of their nature seek their centre; but a bird flies upwards, because it hath not onely the form of gravity, but also that of an animall or sensible living creature, and so this animall or living motion suspends, and hindring the naturall inclination of its gravity or weight, it mounts on high. In like manner, an insensible mixt body having much air and fire mixt with its earth sinks downward but slowly, but if there

be any weight which is meerly ponderous, it is vehemently carried downwards, unlesse some violent obstacle do hinder it; and the more purely ponderous it is, the more impetuously it is carried of its own nature to its centre: wherefore man consisting of a double nature, to wit, spirituall and corporall or sensible, although the understanding and will by their naturall motion tend towards Almighty God; yet by reason of the mixture of the sensible part, which for its naturall functions hath its sensible organs, it is disturbed with passions, and is more frequently distracted then otherwise it would naturally be; so that although the superiour and spirituall part cannot be violently forced; yet either by error, the understanding being ill informed, or by excessse of appetite the will, becoming ill affected, it is drawn to affect those things which
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are very inordinate. Wherefore, if we intend to find out that in which the nature of the last end of man doth consist, it is necessary to seek it out of its motion, out of the vehemence of its love and ardent affections; but our nature consisting of both the rationall and sensible part, we must not consider the affections of them, who lead their lives like beasts, but of those onely which have reason alwayes for the guide of their actions, which are onely worthy indeed of the true name of men: for if by the experiment of a ponderous body I intend to find out the centre of gravity, I must not consider it in the flight of birds, but by the motion of bodies which are meerly ponderous; but I have formerly proved, that there is no life more purely rationall, then that of Christians, therefore we shall come better to the knowledge of the last end
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of man, by the consideration of the love and affection of Christians, which truly and with all propriety are to be esteemed men, rather than by the inordinate appetites of others. But all Christians which live uprightly, with a most vehement affection, with a sweet concord and harmony, do bend their whole endeavours towards Christ crucified as towards their supreme and last end, for whose sake they esteem all other things as dregs and corruption, and therefore he is their last end, the true God, and supreme good of all mankind.

The last end of man is his compleat and absolute perfection, and therefore the nearer he is unto it, the more perfect he is, and the more he increases in perfection: at the nearer distance he is from it, because to grow perfect is nothing else then to approach unto his last end; but
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there hath never any thing been found by coming near unto which by the approaches of the understanding and affection (we ſpeak of them here and not of corporal approaches) humane nature hath ſo much profited as unto Chriſt crucified, inſomuch that the more nigh it comes unto him, the more vehemently it affects him, and the more it becomes (as I have formerly ſhown) perfect in all morality; whence it plainly appears, that Chriſt is the laſt end of humane life. The deſire of the laſt end is moſt naturall unto all things, and therefore every thing immoveably adheres unto its laſt end; for the laſt end in practiſall things is like the firſt principles in things of ſpeculation: Therefore as the firſt principles are ingrafted in our nature, ſo is the deſire of our laſt end, and therefore it perſiſts immoveable. Therefore when a man no way diverted

verted by his vicious appetites, doth rationally so firmly fix his affection upon some one thing so tenaciously, that he disesteems all others for it, and had rather lose his life then forsake it, it is a sign that he hath truly found out his last end; and hence it is, that although others have prefixed unto themselves other last ends, yet we have seen none, or very few, except Christians, who had rather lose their lives then forsake those ends of theirs; others undergo the extremity of all miseries to conserve their lives; for a man will give all he hath rather then lose his life: but Christians do not onely patiently, willingly and joyfully lose all they have for Christ, but even they esteem their lives as nothing for his sake; and certainly if Christ were not the supreme Good, such men of the greatest wisdom would not lose their lives, being the most precious
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unto them , for the defence of the greatest of all errors.

Moreover things which are of the same nature being ordained for the same end, and in that regard being united, even as all ponderous bodies are in & tending to their centre, it is a most manifest argument seeing that there was nothing ever found in which men were so firmly united as in Christ crucified, that he is the last end of man ; for those that believe in him are no lesse united and linked together, then all the parts of the earth being compacted into one solid globe are adherent to their centre : in the same manner all Christians which truly seek Christ, come to have but one heart and one soul in him , nay , the more they profit in their Faith, with greater delight and more ardent charity do they love one another : if therefore Christ were onely a man , and his Faith contain

contain a clandestine and impious fiction and forgery, it would not have taken such effect in so many thousands of men of severall conditions and qualities; because these who are onely tyed together by falsity are easily dissolved, nor could so many men grounding the union of their friendship on the false foundation of an error, increase their love as the error grew more enormous: spirituall delights they are the greater when our soul approaches nearer to its last end, and then they are most perfect when they more attain unto the end it self. If man therefore be somewhat delighted when he beholds his end imperfectly afar off, he will be farre more when he shall more perfectly possesse it; but the delight which Christians do enjoy of Christ, surpasseth all the exterior pleasures of the senses or understanding; which appears out of
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three things : first, out of the incomparable constancy of Martyrs , of whom we reade innumerable , who with joy and mirth ran to their torments as to their nuptials , and triumphing in the midst of their sufferings have sung hymns unto God, as if they had been in some place of pleasure : which could no way happen; unlesse by the excesse of an immentie delight, as if all their corporall senses were brought asleep , and Christ had defended them from all grief and terrour , which truly is a prerogative not granted to any other delight : for a grief (as experience teaches) disturbs the whole man, and expelling all pleasure puts him out of himself. Secondly, out of the infinite examples of the antient Monks, who, forsaking the world and wandring in the deserts and caves as the companions of wild beasts, in abstinence, fasting , and
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mortification, being in want of all things, and naked, have nevertheless lived most joyfully with that unspeakable content which they found in the contemplation of Divine things. And as yet we see the imitation and prints of their footsteps in the Religious men, who in great numbers (as I have said) of their own accords subjecting themselves to a willing servitude and to perpetuall clausures, do most contentedly and joyfully passe their lives under a most exact obedience, as if they were set at liberty by being subjected under this yoke of Grace. Thirdly, out of the lives of most wise men, who flourishing with the erudition of all Sciences, having drunk of the sacred fountain of holy Scriptures, and tasted the sweetnesse of Christ, have given over all other Sciences, being onely delighted with his Doctrine, unto which

which they have stuck so firmly, as if they could not be drawn from it, esteeming all the wisdom of Philosophers and eloquence of the Orators as dry apples and unsavoury, which I can testifie of very many, such as I have known to have done so; but of these examples it is manifest, that the delights which proceed out of the Faith & Contemplation of Christ crucified do far surpass all others: we must therefore conclude that they proceed from the universal and supreme good, and chiefly because the more near access we have unto Christ by Faith and Love, the more are those delights augmented.

And that we may briefly conclude with one argument, joyning in one all the proprieties of the last end; all the individuall or singular natures of the same kind (as I have said) are ordained for the same last end, and all men do agree in the nature of their
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last end, though not in the thing in which that nature of the last end is contained, for this is that which we seek. The blisse therefore of man consisting in an act of our understanding, we must conclude, that that thing to which the nature of the last end agrees, is that in which all the most rationall and which are most pure of heart do agree in, and with all uniformity seek after it, and do immoveably insist upon, and which they love above themselves, and consequently are most admirably delighted in it, and 'deriving from it the integrity of their lives, and the splendour of a celestially clarity, and transformed with a Divine love, become even one and the same thing with it, and being in a manner raised above the world, valuing all terrene things as dirt, they take joy onely in those Divine favours, and lastly enjoy a most blessed quiet
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and peace of mind. But these things which are the conditions of the supreme Good were never found in any but in Christ crucified, and that as he is true God, and therefore he is the supreme Good.

But why should I insist longer in these things which are of themselves manifest? For Good of its own nature desiring to communicate it self, the supreme Good must needs be that which most desires to communicate its virtue; but there is no communication of any other good found so great and ample as that which proceeds from Christ Jesus, after whose coming into the world and the propagation of his Faith, the whole world is purged of a dark and profound mist of finnes and errors, and replenished with all virtue and sanctimony of life, and so many graces
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and favours are from thence granted and decreed unto the faithfull, that they are rightly esteemed happy and blessed upon earth ; for if there can be any felicity or blisse upon earth, it is onely found in the Christians, which I have proved in the Epitome of the simplicity of a Christian life.

The incomparable Clemency and Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ declares the infinite abundance of his Goodnesse ; because no malice of any hainous sinners and wickednesse are sufficient to make him deny or deferre his pardon to those that are truly repentant , but commonly he doth not cease to heap greater graces and gifts on those who return unto him. And it is a thing most experienced, that as often as any shall by sinne forsake him, that he is straight deprived of
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that sweetnesse and righteousness of life, so that he is drowned in terrene impurities and corruptions, and that he is tormented and vexed with intolerable cares ; but as soon as he returns to his former state of recreation and quiet, he is, as it were, cured of the unquenchable thirst of some most malignant calenture.

CHAP. XVI.

The same proved out of the Power, Wisdom and Goodnesse of Christ altogether.

TO the end that those things which I have formerly said of the Power, Wisdom and Goodnesse of Christ may be more easily understood, let us here by way of Epilogue , make a recapitulation of them. We affirm that if Christ be not God, as he declared himself to be,

be, that he was the most arrogant and proud, the most absurd and foolish of all men; but if he did not make himself God, but it was a fallacy of his Disciples, and a humane fiction (as some foolish and doting men do avouch) how could so much Power, Wisdome and Goodnesse proceed out of the greatest of all falsities and prestigious impostures? For if he be not God, I know no other who may any way seem to be so; for if Almighty God do govern and conserve these inferior things by congruous means, we having proved that there is no means more perfect for a good and virtuous life then Christ, I do not see how we may chuse, but either we must confesse that Christ is the true means of our blisse warranted by Almighty God unto mankind, or that we deny the divine Providence and Justice;

Justice ; or that denying there is any God at all , we believe that all things happen by chance or fate: all which , besides the first which must necessarily be granted, are most absurd and foolish.

If there be any true Religion in the world , which by Arguments we have convinced and supposed as granted , who can deny, considering so many , and so forcible Reasons , that this must needs be the Christian Religion ? There being no other so well grounded in Reason ; so that if this be not true , it will force us to deny all Religion.

Also we know that no other Religion was ever so sharply impugn'd perpetually in all Ages, as the Christian ; for other Religions , or rather fraudulent Superstitions , in a manner by the

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same vanity by which they were set afoot, were destroyed and came to nothing; but the Christian as the most pure gold, hath been refined in perpetuall flames of most cruel Persecutions, which could not have happened, had any other been true, and this false.

It is moreover manifest, that the Christian Religion never suffered or was persecuted by virtuous and just men, but was alwayes held by them in great esteem, reverence and veneration, having alwayes had continuall and insatiable Warre, with flagitious, wicked and sacrilegious Tyrants, and their father the Devil; and as many as have persecuted it and its Ministers, have alwayes been (as now-adayes also appears) in a most wicked condition, which never happened to any other Religion;

ligion ; why therefore should we chuse to imitate wicked men, rather then the virtuous ?

Further , there is no other Religion , unto which so many have hitherto been converted , and do daily come unto it upon this condition , that they know themselves not to be called to riches, honours or pleasures , (which in their Baptisme they oblige themselves to renounce) but unto contempt, abstinence, parsimony , contumelies , and (if occasion require it) unto the greatest and last extremity of all ; no man therefore being in his right wits would be induced unto it by such promises and obligations , as we have seen so many thousands to be , unlesse the light of a most evident Verity did even pierce the hearts of mortalls.

The understanding therefore is constrained by these reasons and arguments, to believe this admirable Faith of Christ to be true ; for if one, two or three, or a few arguments do not force an assent, yet all together if they be rightly considered, will not have lesse force then Mathematicall Demonstrations, or then if some of the dead were raised to life for the confirmation of this Verity.

Wherefore if the Christian Religion be true, all others are to be exploded as false ; seeing the Christian doth most constantly avouch, that there is no salvation out of it ; which is no more then reason ; because our salvation consisting in the vision of God, unto which no man can attain without Celestiall and Divine favours , (as I have shewed before)

fore) no man can obtain it without Faith, the Scripture affirming, *Sine Fide impossibile est placere Deo*, That without Faith it is impossible to please God.

Nor is there left any sufficient cause of a just complaint or excuse for those who are born in strange and remote Countreys, which do not admit the Christian Religion; because if any one led by the light of reason, with a right intention and pure heart, do convert himself to the universall and common Parent of all men, and their Creatour, who appears plainly in the order and government of his Creatures, and which affords unto all the things which are necessary for them, and shall beseech him to shew his Verity unto him; he shall not (as I have touched in the beginning of this

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Work according to the Christian Truth) be frustrate of his desire; but shall obtain the Light which is necessary to his salvation, either by internall inspirations, as did holy *Job*; or by Angels, as did *Cornelius* the Centurion; or as the Eunuch by *Philip*, that is, by some Apostolicall man.

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